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The Completion of *Edwin Drood*: Endings and Authority in Finished and Unfinished Narratives

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My signature certifies that this thesis represents my own original work, that it is the result of my own original research, and that I have clearly cited all sources. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

Through an analysis of the reception of Charles Dickens' unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* this thesis establishes the centrality of the figure of the author as the perceived sanction for the completed text. Through an initial analysis of completed narrative, in Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes stories, it shows that the ending is of particular importance as the point at which the reader can look back over the whole and confirm or disconfirm the provisional interpretations which have been made during the reading. It only makes sense to talk of unfinished texts or unfinished narratives in the context of a creative authority, generally identified as the author. An analysis of the reception of unfinished serial narratives of the late Victorian period, specifically the unfinished works of William M. Thackeray and Robert Louis Stevenson, confirms the centrality of the figure of the author in attempts to reconstruct the missing ending.

The main body of the thesis provides a period-based analysis of Droodiana, the completions of and speculations about Dickens' unfinished novel. In the analysis of the strategies employed to justify completions, and the responses to these, it establishes not only that the attempts to take on the authorial authority are perceived as sacrilegious, but that the perception of the completion-writers' lack of the authority to posit an ending affects whether completions are read as able to complete the story: the willingness to submit to the ending (and revise provisional readings in light of it) is dependent on the perception of the authorial authority of the writer. The analysis shows that while the author-function develops over time, there is some continuity from the late Victorian period towards the present. The analysis of Droodian

speculations trace their origin and development through a series of periods, showing that the variety of plots proposed masks a common concern with arriving at Dickens' intended plot: a desire to identify the creative intention with the plot that would provide the most satisfying ending produces an increased variety over time.

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1 Introduction

> There is in this (to digress a little) an accidental insight about 'inevitability', in so far as we often feel retrospective 'inevitability' about a major work of art in its finished state. If *Edwin Drood* had been completed, it would surely have struck us like this, since what we have of it demonstrates such a rare unity of mood and growth. Yet when it breaks off, conflicting possibilities remain very evidently open… (Dyson 1970:281)

When Charles Dickens died in April 1870, he had already started the serial publication of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*: out of a planned 12 instalments, three had been published and another three had been written. With six unwritten instalments, the text stops almost exactly half-way through the intended whole. In the years since Dickens' death the unfinished novel has been at the heart of an extraordinary volume of textual production, called "Droodiana". This thesis will ask why there has been such a great concern with finding the "true ending" of Dickens' work. It will also look at the particular circumstances that set the reception of *Edwin Drood* apart from other novels of the same period, and it will trace the development of Droodian textual production through periods of change towards the present.

The phenomenon of Droodiana is central to this study: while the term may include scholarly writing on the novel or all publication relating to it, it can be more narrowly applied to speculations regarding Dickens' plans for the novel, as well as sequels attempting to create an end for the text. This thesis will not offer any opinion on the question of how *Edwin Drood* would have ended if Dickens had lived to complete it; it will not participate in Droodiana itself. Instead it offers an analysis of the many such speculations and completions written over the last 142 years; not with a view to judge between them or arrive at an authoritative reading of *Edwin Drood*,

but in order to gain insight into the premises of the Droodian enterprise.

Understanding the singular afterlife of *Edwin Drood* depends on a tripartite analysis. First, the question of why endings matter and who is perceived as having the authority to posit them. Second, that of what sets *Edwin Drood* apart from other unfinished texts of the same period. And finally, the question of what conditions encourage the creation and development of the phenomenon of Droodiana itself. The first two of these questions require stepping outside of Dickens' text and its immediate aftermath, the last an analysis of Droodian writing over time.

In order to answer the first, I will look at how endings function in an ostensibly "finished" narrative by analysing the Sherlock Holmes stories of Arthur Conan Doyle. I will ask how the expectation of the ending influences the reading process, and also look at its particular significance for the enigma-driven narrative, like the detective story. Finally, I will ask why Arthur Conan Doyle could revive Holmes after having killed him, and what this suggests about the authority to posit an ending. I will also ask whether the perceived authorial authority to limit or extend a text necessarily entails an authority over interpretation.

The investigation of why unfinished novels other than *Edwin Drood* have not received the same attention will make use of a comparative approach: what sets Dickens' novel apart can only be seen in the context of other works. I will analyse three unfinished novels by two authors: *Denis Duval*, by William Makepeace Thackeray, and *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston* by Robert Louis Stevenson. I will ask how the perceived structure of the text and the perceived access to authorial plans for the text can affect the incentive to speculate. I will also ask in what circumstances

another author can complete a novel authoritatively.

The third question will be developed through an overview of the historical development of Droodiana. It will consist in a series of anlayses of entries in periodicals and published books on the subject. I will anlayse the two main types of Droodiana separately: first, the completions and the reactions to them, and then the speculations. The aim will be to find, not only what the central concerns are in the different periods, and how they relate to and build on each other, but also how the authority to posit an ending is perceived by those who write. I will look for changes and continuities over time.

While a lot has been written about *Edwin Drood* itself, there have been few studies of the Droodian approaches to the novel which do not themselves ultimately attempt to arrive at an ending. Droodian speculation tends to discuss its own tradition, but this is done in order to evaluate the plausibility of earlier readings, and the contributions of the various publications, in relation to a perceived "true" text, not as an object in itself. Exceptions can be found, for example in Ray Dubberke's statistical analysis of the perception of Datchery's identity in "Edwin Drood by the Numbers" (Dubberke 2004).

The most important non-Droodian study of Droodiana, and an invaluable foundation for my own analysis, is Don Richard Cox' *Annotated Bibliography of Charles Dickens' 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood'* (1997). While it covers an impressive array of sources and offers a historical overview of the material in an introductory section, however, its primary purpose is enumeration, not analysis. Droodiana, moreover, is generally referred to in entries on *Edwin Drood* in reference

works, but such treatment is invariably very limited. Similarly, Droodiana features in scholarly editions of the novel, the most comprehensive of which is Margaret Cardwell's Clarendon edition from 1972. Here, too, however, the space constraints limit analysis.

Michael Lund, in his *Reading Thackeray* (1988), discusses the unfinished serial narrative in the context of commentaries on *Duval* and *Edwin Drood* in periodicals of the time. However, his concern is to demonstrate a Victorian preoccupation with potential and the position in the middle of the serial narrative (rather than the end), as a way of understanding their interest in the unfinished works of these writers. While Lund's reading of Victorian society, and the claim that they were more disposed to view fragments as viable texts, would seem to be borne out by the afterlife of *Edwin Drood*, my study is not concerned with seeing how Dickens' text itself thematises unfinishedness.

My thesis is concerned with the premise and development of Droodiana and its attitude to the unfinished text. Because there can be no concept of an "unfinished" text without an idea of a unifying figure with an intention of further creation and an authority to create the foundation for interpretation, the function of the author as a sanction of unity will be important to this study. The theoretical foundation for this thesis can be found primarily in the writings of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. While the question of the author was not altogether new when Barthes published his essay in 1967, "The Death of the Author" has set the terms for the discussion of the topic in the years that have followed. That is not to say that it has remained uncontested: the year after its publication in French, Foucault placed the very premise

of the essay into question in his "What is an author?" (1969), and there has been steady concern with the figure of the author, and how we relate to it, in subsequent literary theory. This thesis does not attempt to provide a comprehensive exegesis of their respective works, but will make use of individual writings that are fruitful in the description of Droodiana; primarily, this centres on Barthes' *S/Z* (1970) and Foucault's "What is an Author".

Barthes' essay on "The Death of the Author" is directed against the Author as a limitation on the legitimate interpretation of a text. While my thesis does make use of Foucault's author-function in order to describe a continuing tendency in reading, it is not an attempt to undermine Barthes' claim in this respect. I will not be arguing that an author's meaning should be the aim of our readings of texts. Quite the contrary: this thesis is based in the conviction that meaning cannot (and should not) be reduced to an authorially intended interpretation. My concern, then, is not with the limitation of interpretation, and what it can legitimately draw on, but with its foundation and the frequently unstated premises of reading. It must be stressed, however, that this thesis does demonstrate a certain continuity over time; it makes no claims as to the universality of this approach to reading.

My first chapter will explore the importance of the ending by looking at the reading process in the ostensibly "finished" text. It will focus on the detective novel, as the epitome of the finished narrative, and Sherlock Holmes in particular because of his wide popular appeal, the connection he affords to Droodiana and Droodian self-understanding, and because Arthur Conan Doyle's changes to the text (by killing and then reviving Holmes) provides a fruitful illustration of the author-function as I

approach it in this thesis. Using Barthes' "hermeneutic code", moreover, I will discuss the first-time reader's continuous revision of their understanding of the plot based in what Frank Kermode called the "confidence of the end" (Kermode 1967:18). This discussion will show that while the reader is free to read and interpret the text without being limited by an authorial interpretation, this interpretation is done within limits of a text which is sanctioned by the author, or at least by a writer and a publication process which together have been identified with the "author". The text as an entity is approached by readers as well as literary critics as if it were a natural whole, a field in which meanings can be produced, while the idea of the author is rejected. By analysing the reception of texts as they deviate from the "natural", whole text, I will show that the idea of the author serves as the authority which circumscribes texts: it is the perceived authorial intention to write more than what was written that creates an "unfinished text".

Having established that the implication when we speak of an "unfinished text" is that the author had intended to write more, I will in my second chapter turn to a closer analysis of three such unfinished texts in order to find out how they were treated in terms of publication and reception, and thereby discover what set *Edwin Drood* apart. I will analyse the reception of texts by Thackeray and Stevenson, authors who, while not equalling Dickens' stature, at least approached it. Looking at the combination of publishing history and perceived structure, as well as the authorities relied on by those who would provide a plausible continuation of the story, I will show that the treatment of all three works display a desire to arrive at a summary of the author's intended plot. I will also show that the perceived structures of the novels

are significant in contributing to the type of speculation found in the treatment of Dickens' final novel, but not in any of these. My analysis, moreover, will suggest that alongside the perceived structural qualities of the text, the publishers' endorsement of a particular plot outline, as well as such a plot having been presented together with the text, may influence the presence of speculation; but it also shows that a final appeal may still be made to perceived authorial creative intention in challenging these. This chapter will show that what sets *Edwin Drood* apart is a combination of Dickens' singular status as an author, the perception that this novel would have been a detective story, and the long period between the initial publication of the work and the publication of something approaching an authoritative plot outline. This chapter confirms the centrality of the figure of the author to both the concept and the reception of the unfinished text, as well as a desire for the authorial ending; it also demonstrates the complexity of the circumstances that set *Edwin Drood* apart.

Having arrived at a provisional understanding of what sets *Edwin Drood* apart from other unfinished texts, I will in my third chapter turn to a closer analysis of the reception of *Edwin Drood* itself. This will be done in my final two chapters. In the first of these, my third chapter, I will return to an investigation of the authority of the author, which has been strongly suggested by my findings in my first two chapters. This chapter focuses on the strategies adopted by those who would write completions of Dickens' text, and the reactions to them in the press. I will draw on Foucault's description of the "author-function", and see it in light of Walter Benjamin's idea of the "aura", interpreting the latter as a period-specific expression of the "author-function". Together they allow me to identify a perception of the unauthorised

completions as somehow sacrilegious in their lack of a respectful distance in their attitude to the aura of the work of art. I will compare the believing and the sceptical reactions to the spiritualist completion of *Edwin Drood*, and show the extent to which those readers who believe that the completion was written by Dickens differ in their readings of the text itself from those who consider the completion a fraud. The chapter will then trace the development and reception of Droodian completions through periods, showing that while the "author-function" is historically constructed, there is a strong continuity from the Victorian period towards the present. This is, however, a continuity which accommodates a certain amount of change. I will show that this change would seem to be influenced by the developments of Droodian speculation.

Having established the importance of Droodian speculation as an influence on the wider perception of the novel, my fourth chapter will then turn to the development of Droodian speculation itself. As I will show, the aim of the speculation is to arrive at Dickens' intended ending, as it would have been had he lived to write it. Quite often, this also means attempting to arrive at the most satisfying end to the text, but this is invariably justified by appeals to Dickens' abilities as a writer. I will show that Droodian speculation has its origins in the rejection of the authority of Forster on the grounds that his plot outline does not provide a satisfying conclusion, and that the search for a plot which could provide both a disconfirmation of expectations and a feeling of consonance became the central focus of the most prolific period of debates, in which Droodian speculation attracted the attention of major literary names, as well as the wider literary culture. I will also show that while there is a strong continuity in the arguments presented and the rhetoric employed by Droodian speculations, the plot

outlines they produce are widely different. By analysing the speculation in terms of periods, I will show how the emphasis of the proposed plots changes according to historical circumstances and literary trends. I will also show that while the incentive for the speculations primarily springs from a search for the satisfying plot, readings in which this experience is not a central feature developed in response to this type of speculation. While it does trace Droodiana towards the present, the focus of this thesis is primarily on the late Victorian and the Edwardian periods. They serve as the foundation for the understanding of what follows, and are therefore accorded a closer study.

2 Sherlock Holmes – endings in the finished narrative

> People have often asked me whether I knew the end of a Holmes story before I started it. Of course I did. One could not possibly steer a course if one did not know one's destination. (Doyle 1924:106-7)

The later chapters of this thesis will investigate the authority to posit endings in unfinished narrative. Before this can be done, however, it is necessary to explore the function of the ending itself. This chapter will therefore look at the ostensibly finished narrative with a view to analysing the importance of its ending. For this purpose I have chosen the Sherlock Holmes stories, written by Arthur Conan Doyle, who, as the opening quote shows, said he constructed them backwards from the dénouement, positioning his characters and events with the end in view. This illustrates an important point for my argument: the narrative as constructed, or *plotted* towards an end; and it raises the question of how we, after Roland Barthes' declaration of the death of the author, can deal with the author's position in this context.

As my investigation, both in this chapter and the following, centres on the question of finished and unfinished narrative, I should clarify what I understand by the word "narrative". A provisional definition for the purposes of this chapter might be that "narrative" is the telling of a story; and "story" is what is told in narrative. This definition is tautological, one term relying on the other, and this reflects the interdependence of the terms, which complicates any simple division between the two. However, the distinction is useful in that it makes it possible to speak of a beginning, middle and end of one that does not necessarily coincide with the beginning, middle and end of the other. This distinction becomes important primarily in the analysis of the type of narrative that does not follow the sequence of the story,

but which reorders it. Through the later parts of this thesis I will primarily be concerned with unfinished narrative as unfinished plot: my concern is not the narrative that the author had not finished polishing, but the plot that is cut short before it is awarded an ending.[1] In this investigation of plot and the importance of endings I will being by drawing on Peter Brooks' *Reading for the Plot* (1984), making use of his definition of plot as "'overcoding' of the proairetic by the hermeneutic" (Brooks 1984:18). Brooks' definition relies heavily on the codes which Roland Barthes developed for use in textual analysis, and I will therefore begin this chapter with an investigation of these codes. Because my aim is to clarify Brooks' definition, my main focus will be on the two codes Barthes called "proairetic" and "hermeneutic". In order to clarify what is meant by an overcoding by the hermeneutic code, I will go into further detail as to its makeup before using "The Musgrave Ritual" by Conan Doyle to show how the series of enigmas drive the reader forward towards the end of the narrative.

In order to consider separately the two interrelated functions of the hermeneutic code that interest me in particular here, I will explore the two Aristotelian terms *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* as used by Brooks and Frank Kermode, respectively. My aim in so doing will be to clarify Brooks' and Kermode's use of them, by highlighting how they deviate from Aristotle, but also to show the continuation of a view of plot which emphasises the importance of an experience of disconfirmation and consonance in the retrospective apprehension of it. I here tie the promise of meaning at the end of narrative to the term *anagnorisis*, as the experience of looking back at the text with a feeling of disconfirmation of expectations, but

[1] For further clarification of this point, see the opening of my next chapter.

simultaneously a sense of consonance within the text as a whole; and I will argue that the power of this ending is dependent on *peripeteia*, the twist or misdirection in plot, which takes the narrative away from its predictable path: the desire for ending is not for the end and its revelation alone, but for the sudden experience of consonance (as opposed to a continuous experience of consonance), which is achieved through the peripeteic sidestepping of a direct line of revelation between the posing of the question and its answer.

In the following section I will develop this in order to show how the desire for the end is reliant on the reader's confidence that narrative has been structured in this way. I will contrast the retrospective ordering of autobiography with the narrative ordering of the detective story in order to highlight how the reader's confidence in the end would seem to be reliant on the perception of a structuring intention. To back this up, I will then show how Kermode expresses the assumption that the end has structured all that precedes it in a narrative, before going on to show how the same assumption underlies Dennis Porter's description of the formal detective genre as closed by positive endings. In order to analyse the assumptions underlying this claim, I will provide a cursory investigation of the endings of some Holmes stories. This will lead me to conclude that Porter's claims, like Kermode's, are examples of the confidence the reader has in the closure, the *anagnorisis*, of the end, thereby going some way towards explaining the way in which desire for ending functions.

At this point in the chapter I will have established that the desire for the end is founded in a desire for *anagnorisis*, and that it resides in a confidence in the text perceived as plotted towards an ending. With my analysis of Pierre Bayard's treatment

of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* I will then problematise this by showing how a reader can produce more than one peripeteic plot in the same text, which leads me to conclude that the desire for *anagnorisis* is not necessarily limited to a desire for the *anagnorisis* intended by the author. Through a discussion of the premise of Bayard's analysis, however, I will arrive at the central question of the third and final section of this chapter: the function of the author as what sanctions the text as a finished whole.

This will be done in the context of the already explored tendency to revise the provisional understandings of the plot as new information becomes available to the reader in the text; but more specifically it will be discussed through the investigation of Doyle's apparent authority to change the ending (or at least the import of the ending) of "The Final Problem" retroactively as accepted by readers: Holmes died at Reichenbach; now he doesn't. Doyle had the authority to change the possible readings of his ending after the fact. This could confirm that we do not normally challenge the creative authority of the author, certainly not in the finished text. More importantly, however, it will allow me to lay the ground for my later chapters by explaining what makes the unfinished text a problem for the reader: if the finished text provides the sanctioned whole from which meaning can proliferate, the unfinished text lacks this sanction because it lacks the end.

2.1 Plot

A discussion of the importance and power of endings in narrative, which is the aim of this chapter, is closely tied to an understanding of narrative as plotted in relation to such an end. The usefulness of the term "plot" in this context is dependent on a

clarification of its meaning here. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word itself has been used from at least the 16th century to mean the outline or synopsis of a literary work, but the word has, even when limited to the discussion of literature, taken on a diffuseness of meaning which can make it problematic as an academic term if it is not clearly set out. Peter Brooks, in his *Reading for the Plot* takes this richness of meanings as his starting point, tracing the continuity of meaning in the variety of uses (from the meaning of "small piece of land" to "complot"), and points to the common theme of demarcation and structuration as key components of the meaning (Brooks 1984:11-12). While this analysis is useful in its emphasis on the word's connotations of ordering, Brooks' own definition of "plot" is more important for my purposes: "an 'overcoding' of the proairetic by the hermeneutic, the latter structuring the discrete elements of the former into larger interpretive wholes, working out their play of meaning and significance" (Brooks 1984:18). This subchapter will analyse this definition, by exploring the terms Brooks borrows from Barthes, in order to show how closely the question of endings is tied to this conception of plot. It will also discuss its close connection to the formal detective story as the epitome of the plotted narrative.

Barthes' codes

As part of his break with the structuralist approach to narrative Roland Barthes wrote *S/Z* (1970), in which he developed what he later called "textual analysis" (Barthes 1981:135).[2] This type of analysis continues one aspect of structuralism in its rejection

[2]The essay "Textual Analysis of Poe's 'Valdemar"' is a shorter attempt at this type of analysis, but Barthes also explicitly refers to *S/Z* as textual analysis in it (Barthes 1981:159, n1).

of reference to the intention of the author in any attempt to fix meaning in the text; but Barthes' approach in this book goes further by also rejecting any possibility for fixing meaning by uncovering an inherent structure in the text itself. Instead he proposes a fluid structuration according to five codes that allow him to suggest how the reader could create meaning from the text by drawing on the already read (*déja lu*) – the knowledge and conventions the reader has acquired as a member of society and a reader.

The use of the word "code" might be misleading. Barthes' codes are not encoded signs that signify one correct meaning to the competent reader able to decode them. Rather, they are tentative groupings of different approaches to the text that we combine to create meaning when we read. They can all participate in the same words or phrases, even sequences within the text, and they allow the reader to draw different meanings from that same piece of text. Barthes writes that "the code is a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures" (Barthes 1974:20). This idea of a code as a "perspective of quotations" emphasises the intertextual quality of the codes, but also the code's character as a point of view which does not provide an exhaustive or objective reading of the text; the code as a "mirage of structures" refers to the illusory nature of the structures the reader would see in the text and think were integral to it: the reader does not see a fixed structure or meaning in the text, but creates both based on what he or she brings with them to it. They "de-originate the utterance" (Barthes 1974:21): meaning no longer springs from the creative intention of the author, but is re-created with each reading as it draws on different experiences. Based on this, Barthes stresses that no analysis using these codes can be exhaustive,

and the codes themselves are provisional.

Barthes makes use of five codes in his analysis, but the two that Brooks' definition of plot relies on are the hermeneutic and the proairetic codes, which Barthes describes as "impos[ing] their terms according to an irreversible order" (Barthes 1974:30). That is to say, they create directions in the text, keeping the reader from entering them at any point or combining their different elements according to other criteria than those they provide. This sets them apart from the other three (cultural, symbolic and semiotic codes), described as "permutable, reversible connections, outside the constraints of time" (Barthes 1974:30), meaning that they can be entered at any point in the text and develop connections with other points irrespective of their place in either narrative or story.

The "irreversible order" Barthes finds in the proairetic code functions on the level of the story: this code allows the reader to structure actions into a sequence in the text, creating connections between otherwise isolated incidents and grouping them according to what Barthes describes as "logico-temporal order" (Barthes 1974:52): action in the text is "capped by a *conclusion* and consequently seems to be subject to some logic" (Barthes 1974:53). The proairetic code groups events in sequences, which are themselves part of a larger sequence; but these sequences are not necessarily presented as such in narrative: the reader uses this code to lift out the story from its fragmented presentation in narrative, making it into a coherent whole with a beginning and an end.

The hermeneutic code, meanwhile, structures what Barthes calls "the enigma" of the text. The enigma, as the word indicates, is dependent on a hidden truth, or

solution, which this code structures itself around. The “irreversible order” of the hermeneutic code is a movement from question to answer, but the text teases the reader, providing hints and false clues while moving towards a revelation at the end. Barthes describes it as “a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer” (Barthes 1974:17). The formation of the enigma and its revelation are found on the narrative level, and the maintaining of the enigma helps structure the narrative. In Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, for example, one of the central enigmas structuring the narrative is Mr Stapleton’s attempt to kill off the Baskervilles in order to inherit the property. This becomes apparent only in the final pages of the narrative, but the reader has been provided with clues in the form of Stapleton’s strange behaviour throughout. The hermeneutic code works, however, because the reader is also throughout provided with the false clues of the convict on the moor and the possibility of a spectral dog executing a family curse. Unlike the proairetic code, which the reader continually makes use of in order to construct a coherence to the story while reading, drawing on the clues to chronology in the text, the true identity of each of the disparate functions of the hermeneutic code is only visible to the re-reader: only knowledge gained from the revelation of the enigma allows us to distinguish what Barthes calls “a snare” from “a partial answer” (Barthes 1974:75). The snare is a false clue, or a blind, designed to lead the reader to the wrong assumption, presenting itself as a partial answer to the question that the enigma poses, in order to delay the arrival at the correct understanding in the end.

According to Barthes, these two directional codes form the primary

structuring force of the "classical", or "readerly", text: the readerly text "is a multivalent, but incompletely reversible system. What blocks its reversibility is just what limits the plural nature of the classic text ... on the one hand truth; on the other empiricism" (Barthes 1974:30). The multivalence of the text, this suggests, is mainly a result of the other three codes, which are plural and reversible in that you can enter them from any point in the text and combine them freely in the writerly production of meaning, unrestrained by their immediate context. "Truth" and "empiricism" refer to the hermeneutic and proairetic codes, respectively, elsewhere referred to as "the Voice of Truth" (Barthes 1974:21, 209) and "the Empiric Voice" (Barthes 1974:203) or "the Voice of Empirics" (Barthes 1974:21). The readerly text, as opposed to the "writerly" text, is one in which the reader remains relatively passive in the creation of meaning, being content to rely primarily on the directional codes with a view to find out what happens and "who did it".[3] While they provide the main structuring force, this is not only dependent on the two directional codes, however; later in his analysis, Barthes writes that "the readerly is controlled by the principle of non-contradiction", reinforced by additional "solidarities" (Barthes 1974:156): these "solidarities" are created when the various codes back each other, creating a redundancy of meaning, for example the chronological code backing up the proairetic, or the symbolic underscoring the enigma. The result is what Barthes calls "Replete Literature" (Barthes 1974:200), in which readers do not look for contradictions but consonances.

[3]The "writerly" text, conversely, requires an active reader to step in as producer in order to actively construct a reading from the polysemy. While Barthes links the "readerly" to the "classical" text of the 19th century, and the writerly to modernist and postmodern writing, his emphasis on the reader in these discussions suggests that while some texts may encourage a writerly approach to a greater extent, the terms also describe the attitude of a reader. One might therefore imagine a writerly approach to a 19th century work which would generally be read as a "classical" text. I will look at one such example later in this chapter, in my discussion of Pierre Bayard's *Sherlock Holmes was Wrong*, and Barthes' own reading of Balzac's "Sarracine" would fall into this category.

The readerly text, as Barthes paints it here, is a text in which the various codes are controlled by their mutual correspondence. The more replete (or readerly, or classical) text becomes the text which allows us to include the larger number of elements, the meaning of which are controlled by the context of other meanings. Meaning, Barthes writes, "is a force which attempts to subjugate other forces, other meanings, other languages. The force of meaning depends on its degree of systematization: the strongest meaning is the one whose systematization includes a larger number of elements" (Barthes 1974:154). A replete, coherent text in which all codes contribute to one meaning will therefore only with difficulty allow a writeable approach to the text – an approach which relies on the polysemy of the codes and the reader's liberty to follow that polysemy.

The division into readerly and writerly texts is not an unproblematic one, and it becomes more problematic when one considers Barthes' emphasis on the role of the reader in the creation of meaning. Even a coherent text in which the whole could be subsumed under one meaning (in the sense cited above) allows the contrarian reader to approach the text "against the grain", as it were: to emphasise different codes and thereby draw divergent connections, as Barthes himself does in *S/Z*. The hermeneutic and the proairetic codes, in Barthes' portrayal, would seem to restrict the liberty of the contrarian reader, however.

Brooks' definition of plot as an "'overcoding' of the proairetic by the hermeneutic, the latter structuring the discrete elements of the former into larger, interpretive wholes, working out their play of meaning and significance" (Brooks 1984:18) can now be explained. Taking into account how Barthes describes these

codes, this means that plot is a structuration that makes use of the directional codes; but, more than this, it is one in which the story (or the action) is presented according to the requirements of the concealment or revelation of the enigma. That is to say, the more plotted a narrative is, the less it will follow the development of the story. The reliance on the two directional codes from Barthes' analysis reveals an emphasis on structuration which is central to Brooks' investigation: he analyses the connotations of the word "plot" in order to bring out precisely this meaning of "boundedness, demarcation, [and] the drawing of lines to mark off and order" (Brooks 1984:12). "Overcoding" not only entails the combined structuring force of these two codes, but an arrangement in which one is controlling the other, subsuming it to its own structuration: the sequences of action contribute to the playing out of the enigma and the enigma structures the organisation of action sequences, moving the reader from the beginning to the end of the narrative. Where the overcoding is weak and the proairetic is dominant, the text provides an episodic narrative that closely follows the story; where the overcoding is strong, and the hermeneutic code dominates the text, the text provides the type of narrative that is generally associated with the detective story: the detective story is not only structured around the enigma, it makes the search for the solution explicit, the detective (and, in most Holmes stories, at least, the narrator) doubling the reader's attempts to disentangle the mystery by sorting clues and partial answers from snares and incidental information.

In order to understand plot, and the importance of endings in plot, this chapter must therefore turn to a closer investigation of the hermeneutic code.

The hermeneutic code

The hermeneutic code's overcoding of the proairetic entails an ordering of the sequences of actions, not according to the internal chronology of the story, but according to the requirements of the narrative and the hermeneutic code. More specifically, it orders the story according to the need to delay the revelation of the enigma; but simultaneously the directionality of the hermeneutic code promises that meaning, the truth, will be revealed in the end: "[e]xpectation thus becomes the basic condition for truth: truth, these narratives tell us, is what is *at the end* of expectation.. . . Truth is what completes, what closes" (Barthes 1974:76). Not only does the classic text, through the hermeneutic code, create an expectation for a solution, this solution must necessarily be found at the end of narrative. This is so, both because the narrative can only afford to stop the play of partial revelation and dilatory tactics once it is over and no longer needs to hold the attention of the reader, and because only at the end can the reader stop the continuous revision of the significance of the information found in the text.

The hermeneutic code has the double function of delaying the revelation of the enigma while simultaneously moving the reader towards, and preparing him for, this very revelation. Barthes describes the middle ground between question and answer as a "dilatory area" focused on the interruption, suspension of and diversion from, the straight line between the question and the answer (Barthes 1974:75). The list of such delaying tactics in Barthes' analysis includes deliberate sidestepping of the truth of the enigma through misleading focus, either through focusing on something other than the truth ("snare") or focusing on the truth in a misleading way

("equivocation"); the "suspended answer", which omits the use of crucial words that would draw undue attention to the truth of the enigma, and "jamming", which consists in the enigma being declared insoluble; but also the "partial answer", which reveals one part of the truth while leaving the rest in obscurity, thereby maintaining the expectation for the revelation of the truth (Barthes 1974:75).

The function of these various delays lies in keeping the possibilities of different truths open, and, through this, maintaining the interest in the narrative; but this interest is based in the expectation that the end will provide the revelation of the truth. It is the expectation of the moment at the end that Brooks refers to when he writes that we read in "anticipation of retrospection" (Brooks 1984:23), that is to say, in the expectation of the backwards glance at the end of narrative when all has been revealed. This is in accordance with Barthes' observation, noted on page 28, that the tactics of the hermeneutic code create an expectation that a truth will be provided at the end of narrative. While reading, the reader *attempts* to apply the hermeneutic code to make sense of the narrative. I claimed earlier that this code is only visible to the re-reader; this needs to be qualified: the first time reader attempts to apply the hermeneutic code while progressing through the text. This is done provisionally, based on what new information becomes available, but it consists of a series of readings, using a variety of structurations, which assign points of the text to the hermeneutic code.

Holmes, in the very beginning of "The Musgrave Ritual" (1893), observes the following to Watson after recounting Musgrave's original account of the mystery: "You can imagine, Watson, with what eagerness I listened to this extraordinary

sequence of events, and endeavoured to *piece them together*, and to devise some common thread upon which they might all hang" (Doyle 2009:123, my emphasis). Holmes' assumption that the narrated events are all related is an assumption that belongs to the reading of narrative more than to the methods of a realistic detective. He is in fact here acting more as a reader than as a detective: it is according to the conventions of coherent plot, not in life, that what at first appears unrelated will turn out to be intimately linked in the end. He "reads" Musgrave's narrative before decoding the ritual, and as he does so he attempts to piece together the enigma from perceived clues that work like those of the hermeneutic code. The first time reader, while reading, constructs a provisional understanding of the plot, attempting to piece together the information that is given, decoding it as partial answers or snares while attempting to anticipate the revelation expected in the *dénouement*. Reading is a continuous attempt to preempt the illumination of the backwards glance at the end of narrative, in which the relevance of the seemingly unconnected becomes apparent. Throughout, however, the reader simultaneously defers to the new information of the text and discards or revises these provisional constructions, because the expectation is that the end will accommodate them in its solution. Any hypothesis which does not accommodate them therefore automatically becomes discarded as incorrect.

Because the hermeneutic code is so central to the investigation of the function of the ending in a narrative text, the following section will analyse how it could function in a formal detective story, which is dominated by the hermeneutic code.

The enigmas of "The Musgrave Ritual"

A Sherlock Holmes story like “The Musgrave Ritual” has as its purpose the telling of the resolution of an enigma. It is not this, however, which makes me designate it as dominated by the hermeneutic code. The crucial point is that the text does not allow the reader to see the solution to the enigma until the end, but all the while provides partial resolutions and new enigmas to hold the reader’s interest. In this particular story the enigma is set already before the narration within the narrative begins: Holmes produces “a crumpled piece of paper, an old-fashioned brass key, a peg of wood with a ball of string attached to it, and three rusty old disks of metal” (Doyle 2009:114-15).[4] Not only does this collection of curious artefacts raise the question of what they are and what sort of adventure they could possibly represent, Holmes’ enigmatic comments reinforce their status as parts of the enigma:

> “… the story that hangs round it will strike you as being more curious still.”
> “These relics have a history, then?”
> “So much so that they *are* history.”
> “What do you mean by that?” (Doyle 2009:115).

Watson’s question will only be answered in full at the very end of the narrative. Even before Holmes’ narration begins, then, we are faced with at least two enigmas: what is the importance of the piece of paper, the peg and string, and the metal disks; and what does Holmes mean by the enigmatic comment that “they *are* history”?[5] In fact, this second enigma also functions as a partial answer, but does not enlighten the reader.

[4]This is one of the Holmes stories where Holmes functions as narrator inside Watson’s narration.

[5]The enigma presented by the objects could of course be seen as three separate enigmas (one for each artefact). I have chosen to contain them under one heading because they come together to form the mystery. The enigma could also be subdivided into questions like "what is on the paper" or "what are the metal disks", and I have chosen to contain this under the heading of their importance for simplicity and clarity. It is not my aim to replicate a detailed reading like *S/Z* here.

With the beginning of Holmes' narration, the first enigma is provided with another partial answer by the introduction of yet another enigma (which can again be subdivided): Musgrave wishes Holmes to solve the mystery of the disappearance of his butler and the maid who has previously been engaged to the butler. He develops the mystery through a long narrative exposé of the events at Hurlstone, explaining how he has surprised the butler perusing some family papers, and that the butler on being given notice, but begging to be allowed to stay on for another month, has subsequently disappeared. The butler is established as very clever and as a womaniser who has been engaged to the maid before leaving her for another woman:

> "'With his personal advantages and his extraordinary gifts, for he can speak several languages and play nearly every musical instrument, it is wonderful that he should have been satisfied so long in such a position, but I suppose that he was comfortable and lacked energy to make any change. The butler of Hurlstone is always a thing that is remembered by all who visit us.
>
> "'But this paragon has one fault. He is a bit of a Don Juan, and you can imagine that for a man like him it is not a very difficult part to play in a quiet country district.
>
> "'When he was married it was all right, but since he has been a widower we have had no end of trouble with him. A few months ago we were in hopes that he was about to settle down again, for he became engaged to Rachel Howells, our second housemaid, but he has thrown her over since then and taken up with Janet Tregellis, the daughter of the head gamekeeper. Rachel, who is a very good girl, but of an excitable Welsh temperament, had a sharp touch of brain fever, and goes about the house now — or did until yesterday — like a black-eyed shadow of her former self" (Doyle 2009:118).

These characteristics all function as partial answers to the enigma, as the butler will be revealed to have been killed by his unstable ex-fiancé (with the Welsh temper and a touch of brain fever), because of his womanising and during an attempt to get hold of the treasure which was accessible to him only because of his mental abilities. They are not immediately apparent as such to the reader, however, as this information is

delivered alongside ultimately inconsequential information, as when we are informed that the butler has been married before, that Rachel is the second housemaid and that Janet is the daughter of the head gamekeeper.

The paper is revealed to be a series of questions and answers known as the Musgrave Ritual, and its introduction provides a partial answer to the original enigma of the paper in Holmes' box. The importance of this piece of paper is stressed by Holmes' comment that "'[w]e had better come back to the paper afterwards"' (Doyle 2009:120). The introduction of the Musgrave Ritual, while providing a partial answer to the original question of the meaning of the piece of paper, replaces it with the new enigma of the meaning of the ritual, and its connection to the disappearance of the butler.[6] The reader is thus kept in suspense: the resolution of some minor enigmas fuels the expectations that the other information we are given will also take us towards the resolution of the rest, but the truth is still kept hidden by the unclear status of the information we are given. The reader keeps reading in the expectation that they will be given a solution which accounts for the information they are given.

The circumstances of the disappearance of the butler are themselves heavily affected by the hermeneutic code:

> "'His bed had not been slept in; he had been seen by no one since he had retired to his room the night before; and yet it was difficult to see how he could have left the house, as both windows and doors were found to be fastened in the morning. His clothes, his watch, and even his money were in his room — but the black suit which he usually wore was missing. His slippers, too, were gone, but his boots were left behind. Where, then, could butler Brunton have gone in the night, and what could have become of him?"' (Doyle 2009:121).

[6]That there is a connection between the two is indicated by Holmes' interest in the ritual despite the disappearance of the butler being the primary mystery to be solved in the story.

The paragraph ends with an explicit formulation of the enigma. The preceeding passage indicates that he has not simply gone away, which provides a partial answer, but the information that points to the enigma also obscures it. The passage sets up a false alternative between Brunton having run away or never having left the house. The information that the butler has left all his possessions behind, perhaps especially his money and his shoes (reinforced by his slippers being missing) points to the truth that he did not, in fact, leave. This provisional understanding, however, is apparently contradicted by the subsequent information that "'Of course we searched the house and the outhouses, but there was no trace of him"' (Doyle 2009:122) and "'we ransacked every room and attick"' (Doyle 2009:122), the repetition reinforcing the understanding that he is not anywhere in the house. Both factors in this apparent contradiction are equivocations, but they can also serve as partial aswers. This information all points towards the truth that he never, in fact, left, but that he went looking for the treasure with the maid, who killed him and then locked the door on reentry. As it is presented, however, and with the assurance that the house has been searched reinforcing the false assumption that he never left, this only compounds the mystery. Following this, Musgrave's story reveals, the maid has gone into hysterics, and a little later is traced to the mere, but no further. This leads to a dragging of the mere, where no body is found, only a bag containing "a mass of old rusted and discoloured metal and several dull-coloured pieces of pebble or glass" (Doyle 2009:122). This discovery in turn opens yet another set of enigmas: the importance of the bag of metal and pebbles in the mire and its connection to the disappearance of the butler and, subsequently, the maid. It also provides an example of the "suspended

answer" of Barthes, as the bag of metal is not identified as treasure until later, and it is as treasure that it provides a partial answer to the enigma of what happened to the butler and the maid. This keeps the enigma unrevealed, while still providing a point of reference for the retrospective apprehension at the end of narrative.

Following Musgrave's description of the background to the mystery, Holmes turns his focus to the Musgrave Ritual, cementing its importance. Holmes and Musgrave date it to the middle of the seventeenth century, which provides another partial answer to the enigma it poses, as Charles I was decapitated in 1649. He then proceeds, with the use of a wooden peg and a ball of string (thereby providing yet another partial answer to the first enigma, regarding the importance of the peg and string), to decode the ritual as a map. This in turn brings Holmes and Musgrave to a secret room containing not only the dead butler (revealing the truth of the enigma of the disappearance of the butler, but in turn raising the question of how and why he died), but also "several disks of metal", which are revealed to be old coins, and later revealed to stem from the period of Charles I (Doyle 2009:129, 131). This, then, provides the final partial answer to the original enigma: the piece of paper, the peg and string, and the metal disks have now all been identified – but their importance will not be fully revealed until the enigma of the meaning of the ritual and Holmes' enigmatic comment have also been unravelled. This is done by the revelation of the nature of the metal and "pebbles" found in the mere, which allows Holmes to tie the disparate enigmas together into one neat explanation: in the bag was the crown of the Kings of England, lost when Charles I was executed, and buried at Hurlstone to be ready for Charles II. Holmes then reasons that the butler had realised that the ritual referred to

this treasure and enlisted the help of the scorned maid for its retrieval. She kills him in retribution, breaks down and disposes of the treasure in the mere before running away.

The enigma is revealed, then, at the very end of the narrative. And while Holmes is obliged to speculate about the fate of the maid, the plausibility of this speculation when seen in connection with the rest of the text allows the reader to accept it as truth. Having reached the revelation, the reader is now able to look back on what has gone before and see the workings of the hermeneutic code: to distinguish partial answers from snares or equivocation. This shows that, certainly in a narrative dominated by the hermeneutic code, the main importance of the end is in its promise to provide a truth that can close off speculation and put an end to the continual revision of provisional plots that the reader constructs in order to make sense of narrative.

Anagnorisis and *peripeteia*

Brooks tentatively likens the moment of retrospective illumination to Aristotle's term *anagnorisis*: "If at the end of narrative we can suspend time in a moment when past and present hold together in metaphor – which may be that recognition or *anagnorisis* which, said Aristotle, every good plot should bring . . . " (Brooks 1984:92).[7] Brooks' use of the term here is not entirely in accordance with my understanding of Aristotle: *anagnorisis*, as defined by Aristotle, is "a change from not-knowing to knowing" (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:87), which is what Brooks is relying on when he refers

[7]Brooks' reference to metaphor here is due to a discussion of whether narrative can be said to operate as metaphor ("in its affirmation of resemblance, in that it brings into relation different actions, combines through perceived similarities") or metonomy ("as the figure of linkage in the signifying chain: precedence and consequence") (Brooks 1984:91). This is at best tangential to my argument, and I will therefore not go further into it.

to the term; in Aristotle, however, the term applies to a text-internal change of a character's status of knowledge.[8] Brooks' use transposes this moment of insight to the reader at the end of narrative, looking back and being able to distinguish snares from truth. Brooks' use of the term becomes useful when one recognises it as a very apt term for the reader's flash of insight when the whole of the plot becomes visible: it refers to a moment of sudden understanding. George Whalley describes the tragic hero as primarily suffering because of ignorance, and *hamartia* (the tragic mistake) as an act of ignorance (Whalley 1997:26): in the notes to his translation of the *Poetics*, he observes that the real meaning of the Greek word *hamartia* is "missing the mark" (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:n123). The tragic hero falls into error because he has misinterpreted, in Barthes' terms, snares as answers. When the truth is revealed, he looks back on his previous interpretations and sees them for what they were. This moment, in which the meaning of what has gone before can be grasped, is analogous to the reader's apprehension of meaning at the end of narrative.

The use of the term may be deemed problematic, however, in as far as tragic *anagnorisis* has traditionally been seen as leading to pain and ruin for the character in question. This is something which Brooks develops in his use of the word: "[t]he traditional Aristotelian recognition – *anagnorisis* – also came too late in terms of the life of the hero, who in tragedy most often died of the knowledge gained" (Brooks 1984:213). This may compromise the word as useful for my thesis: the reader's experience of retrospective illumination is not this painful experience – to the

[8]This can be seen in the second part of Aristotle's description: "'Recognition' … is a change from not knowing to knowing, in matters of love and hatred within a blood relationship, in people who have been marked out for success or disaster" (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:87). All his other examples are also concentrated at the characters' arrival at understanding of their real situation.

contrary, I will argue that it is something we desire, and that this desire helps drive us through narrative. However, the "too late" of *anagnorisis* is not integral to the term in Aristotle: while acknowledging that the majority of tragedies make use of what he would consider sub-optimal material, he considers recognition in time to avert death and destruction as superior to the too late recognition of what has been done (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:105).[9]

In either use of the word, the arrival at *anagnorisis* is only made possible by previous mistakenness, or certainly ignorance: a moment of understanding is not possible if all has been clear all along. Returning to the question of the reader, rather than the character, and accepting Brooks' adapted use of the term, I will now look more closely at the nature of this mistakenness. Frank Kermode, in his *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), uses the term *peripeteia* to describe this equivocation: what makes use of the reader's expectations for the end in order to provide a "disconfirmation followed by a consonance" (Kermode 1967:18). That is to say, the text leads us to one conclusion by providing snares, only to then prove it wrong in the end; but when the truth is revealed in the end, and the provisional plot we had constructed is disconfirmed, we must also have been provided with enough truth to be able to deem the revelation to be supported by the text. It is the lack of this experience that makes the *deus ex machina* solution unsatisfying. "Disconfirmation followed by a consonance" can in Barthesian terms be read as the codes of the text working together to enable a false reading of the plot, while also falling into place in the solution

[9]There is, however, room for Brooks' understanding of it if one takes into account that Aristotle elsewhere in the *Poetics* writes that the optimal form of recognition is that which occurs simultaneously with *peripeteia* (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:87). This can in turn be seen in the context of his writing that tragedy consists in a turn of generally good men turning from good fortune to bad (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:95, 97). I am not arguing that Brooks' use is invalid, only that the tragic connotations need not invalidate my use of it here.

provided by the narrative in the end. Returning to "The Musgrave Ritual", its snares suggest that the butler ran away and the maid drowned herself, but the components of the truth (the treasure, the riddle and its age, the lovers' spat, her Welsh temper and the intellectual abilities of the butler) were presented to the reader early on.

Kermode's use of *peripeteia* as the term to describe this double work of the text must be explained. Like Brooks' use of *anagnorisis*, this is a term from Aristotle's *Poetics*, used with a different emphasis. Aristotle defines it as "a [sudden] change [over] of what is being done to the opposite … according to likelihood or necessity" (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:87). There are two parts to this definition; I will look at them separately. First, the sudden change over of what is being done to the opposite: while this could be taken as indicating that it is the action that changes, Aristotle's prime example demonstrates that it is not the action itself that changes, but its import for the characters: "in the *Oedipus*[10], the [messenger] who has come to cheer Oedipus and free him from his fear about his mother, by disclosing who he is [actually] does just the opposite" (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:87). The messenger in question is the one bringing news from Corinth that king Polybus, Oedipus' (adoptive) father, is dead, and who, when Oedipus explains that he still dares not return because of his fears that he might sleep with his mother, thinks he is freeing him from these fears when he explains that Oedipus was only the adopted son of Polybus and Merope. This is exacerbated when the messenger later returns with the herdsman who knows the truth of Oedipus' parentage, believing that knowing the truth will put the king's mind at ease, but to the contrary proving that he was the son of Laius (whom he has killed) and Iocasta (whom he has married). Oedipus has been

[10]Aristotle is referring to Sophocles' play, *Oedipus Tyrannos*.

the murderer of his father and married to his mother since long before the play started, yet the *peripeteia*, according to Aristotle, lies in the information of the messenger. What is being changed over to its opposite is the meaning of Oedipus' search for the killer of Laius.[11] From seemingly being the king working towards the good fortune of freeing his city from plague by punishing a regicide, he becomes the incestous regicide and patricide to be blinded and exiled. In short, it is the moment in tragedy when the protagonist's fortune changes from good to bad (or from bad to good) as a consequence of what has gone before. In Barthes' terms, the enigma of the story is that Oedipus was adopted by Merope and Polybus, but was the real son of Laius and Iocasta. When this information comes to light, what has gone before is reevaluated and given new meaning.

The second part of Aristotle's definition of *peripeteia*, "according to likelihood or necessity", entails a grounding of the turn in what has gone before it. It would therefore ideally preclude a *deus ex machina* as the source of the reversal, instead following naturally from what has already been established at earlier stages of the text. Now, the arbiter of this "naturally" would seem to be the reader (or audience), as would what is "likely" or "necessary" in Aristotle's definition; and as such it would become difficult to pin down in an analysis. If, however, Aristotle's definition is seen in the context of my earlier treatment of Barthes' codes and his discussion of "replete" narrative, it becomes possible to describe the "likelihood" and "necessity"

[11]Shoshana Felman observed that Sophocles' *Oedipus* has the structure of a detective story (Felman 1977:175): the mystery to be solved is that of who has killed Laius and brought pollution, and thereby plague, on Thebes; and the unravelling of the mystery provides an unexpected answer that has been prepared by the text throughout. As such it does not rely on the reader's previous knowledge of the myth (although I do not dispute that it adds another layer to the text), but fits my earlier description of a text dominated by the hermeneutic code (the reader aware of the myth simply gains the position of a re-reader in relation to the enigma).

as "mutually reinforcing coherence of codes".[12] Aristotle's focus is primarily on action (which he considers the constitutive part of drama), and it is this action that must flow from what has happened before. Taking *Oedipus* as the example, again, there is a clear chain of events that follow one another with apparent causality, both on the level of the play (or "narrative") and including the whole of Oedipus' story, which is uncovered as the characters speak of the past (preceding, and causing, the events of the play): the prophecy that the child will murder his father and sleep with his mother causes Oedipus to grow up far from Thebes, ignorant of his true parentage; this in turn makes him leave Corinth in order to avoid fulfilling the prophecy, thus placing him in a position to fulfil it by murdering Laius at a crossroads and later arriving to save Thebes and marry Iocasta. This in turn leads to the plague which provides the starting point of the play, in turn leading Oedipus to attempt a discovery of the perpetrator of the murder he himself committed.[13] While in the first part of his definition of *peripeteia*, then, Aristotle would seem to place his emphasis on the change of a development, the second brings into it a view of plot as action finding its development in its own premise with as little additional interference as possible.

Returning to Kermode's use of the term as "disconfirmation followed by consonance" after this excursion into Aristotle, I would argue that Kermode's definition echoes Aristotle's quite closely. There are differences, however: where Aristotle's concern would seem to be the action and its impact on characters, Kermode, like Brooks, uses *peripeteia* with a view to the narrative and its impact on

[12]Aristotle is writing about drama, not narrative. Both are abstractions we as readers make of texts according to conventions, and plot is a component of both; as such I would argue that this does not pose a fatal objection to the use of Barthes' codes in order to illuminate Aristotle.

[13]There is an element of external aid to the development of the plot in the messenger from Corinth, however.

the reader. This can be seen when he writes that it "depends on our confidence of the end" (Kermode 1967:18). He sketches a scenario in which the reader is fooled into thinking the plot will head in one direction while the narrative is all the while leaving subtle clues that can be drawn on in order to justify a different ending, which will come as a surprise to the reader while simultaneously allowing a feeling of consonance in the text as a whole. As such, Kermode can be seen to incorporate into his use of the term what Aristotle explores elsewhere in *The Poetics*: in a discussion of the *mimesis* of a terrifying and pitiful action, he notes that "events are especially [so] when they happen unexpectedly and [yet] out of [inner] logic" (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:85). Whalley notes that what he translates as "inner logic" is literally "through (*or* because of) each other" (Aristotle and Whalley 1997:n83), which is still narrower than Kermode's "consonance"; but while Kermode would seem to emphasise the deception of plot to a greater degree in his definition, this is still in accordance with *The Poetics*.

2.2 Expectation and desire for the end

The type of plot Aristotle, Kermode and Brooks all find most interesting, then, is the plot which deceives the reader, only to provide a surprising revelation that causes a retrospective illumination of what has gone before, disconfirming the reader's hypothesis, but leading to an impression of consonance. This *peripeteia* followed by *anagnorisis*, in Kermode and Brooks' use of the terms, respectively, is not the painful experience of the tragic hero, but one which gives pleasure to the reader. The reason for my exploring these two terms in such detail has been to illuminate the source of

the reader's desire for the end. What drives the reader through the text is not a search for knowledge per se: knowing that the butler (or, in the case of "The Musgrave Ritual", the maid) did it is not particularly useful outside the particular text. In most cases, as Dennis Porter observes in his *The Pursuit of Crime. Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (1981), "the appeal of the detective story on the level of the anecdote is not in the end but in the process, in what it does to us as we read it rather than in the nature of the secret it withholds for the denouement" (Porter 1981:110): the secret is often something banal, only made interesting by the circumstances that makes it difficult to predict. The hidden truth that the reader desires, then, is not desired for its own sake, but because of its position as what allows us to make sense of the enigma: as *anagnorisis*. The process Porter speaks of is the text's creation, and subsequent satisfaction, of an expectation for coherence. This sub-chapter will first ask what sets the *anagnorisis* of detective fiction apart from the retrospective ordering that assigns meaning to events in general, as they would appear in an autobiography or a history book, showing that the difference lies in its being plotted, or being approached as plotted, towards the end. It will then analyse the endings of some Holmes stories in order to ascertain to what extent the perception of the form as end-determined is due to an inherent trait of this type of narrative or an expectation of the form that the reader perceives as satisfied when the end can account for the facts. Where the first subsection will present narrative as plotted, and the second will question the control this entails by suggesting that its status as end-determined is as much due to the reader's expectations as to any inherent trait of the text, the third will show how Pierre Bayard purposefully produces an alternative plot in Doyle's

detective novel. This will raise the question of what (if the closure of the plot is not inherent, and the *anagnorisis* can be produced by the reader) the importance of the end resides in. That will be the topic of the following sub-chapter.

The end and meaning

The retrospective assignation of meaning is not something particular to the reading of texts of fiction. We do the same when attempting to make sense of our lives, or order any other sequence of events (such as the writing of history). The autobiographical ordering of what has gone before is portrayed, for example, in the reason Holmes provides for the importance of the story of "The Musgrave Ritual": "You see me now when my name has become known far and wide, and when I am generally recognised both by the public and by the official force as being a final court of appeal in doubtful cases" (Doyle 2009:115). From the position of a "now" where Holmes is defined by his ability to solve mysteries, he directs an ordering glance backwards over his own history, emphasising as important that which has lead to that position: "The third of these cases was that of the Musgrave Ritual, and it is to the interest which was aroused by that singular chain of events, and the large issues which proved to be at stake, that I trace my first stride towards the position which I now hold" (Doyle 2009:116). "The Musgrave Ritual" is assigned significance by Holmes' tracing what is now the main focus of his life back to this case as a cause, or at least as a pivotal moment. The retrospective illumination of this moment consists in identifying it as having contributed to the end. This would appear to be precisely what the reader does at the end of the text, identifying the disparate functions of the hermeneutic code

depending on whether they contributed to the revelation of the enigma (partial answer), obscured it by pointing in the wrong direction (snare) or was completely immaterial information. Despite this apparent similarity, which resides in the identification of what has importance in relation to the end, there is a key difference between the autobiographical and fictional plots: particular to the fictional plot is the reader progressing in what Brooks describes as "a spirit of confidence … that what remains to be read will restructure the provisional readings of the already read" (Brooks 1984:23), that is to say, the reader expects the text to be structured with the end in view, and anticipates the retrospection at the end.

In the introduction to this chapter, I quoted Arthur Conan Doyle's autobiography, *Memories and Adventures* (1924), in which he wrote that "People have often asked me whether I knew the end of a Holmes story before I started it. Of course I did. One could not possibly steer a course if one did not know one's destination" (Doyle 1924:106).[14] There are two implications to be drawn from this quotation. The first is that when Doyle in his autobiography finds it necessary to explain how he composes the plots of his Holmes stories, that is because he finds that Holmes has been an important factor in bringing him to his current position: he is famous primarily as the author who created Sherlock Holmes. This is analogous to why Holmes considers "The Musgrave Ritual" to be important: they are both creating provisional autobiographical structurations that may have to be revised later on and will not be final until they die. The second implication of the quotation, however, is

[14]Edgar Allan Poe, generally considered the originator of the form of the detective story, had made this observation before him: "Nothing is more clear than that every plot must be elaborated by its *dénouement* before anything can be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot the indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend towards the development of the intention" (Poe 1956:452-3).

that the fictional plot holds the promise of already having been structured, plotted, according to its end. This is the core of the "confidence of the end", which Kermode considers as central to the desire which carries the reader through the text, and Brooks' description of reading as an anticipation of retrospection.

Kermode provides a very good illustration of it when he writes that "[i]n a novel, the beginning implies the end: if you seem to begin at the beginning, ... you are in fact beginning at the end; all that seems fortuitous and contingent in what follows is in fact reserved for a later benefaction of significance in some concordant structure" (Kermode 1967:148). Kermode's claim voices the expectation of the reader confident that the end will reveal that everything we read is organised and chosen with the end in view. Kermode's description of the novel assumes a care and discrimination in the writing of texts which is not present in the creation of all, if any, novels.[15] The importance of this passage, however, lies precisely in its illustration of the *assumption* that the text has been planned and written with an end in view, and that this end has provided the criteria of selection which dictate what is made available to us: the understanding of the text as plotted. It is this confidence in the end that makes the reader desire the end as the promise of meaning. Desire for the *anagnorisis* based in *peripeteia*, then, is premised in a confidence in narrative as planned: that the plot has been structured so that what the reader considers unimportant asides may turn out to be pivotal moments visible only to the retrospective glance of the reader who has

[15] Among examples of novels that would seem to disprove Kermode's description as universally applicable are Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Eugène Sue's *Les Mystéres de Paris* (1842-43) and William M. Thackeray's *Pendennis* (1848-50), all of which changed and developed during serial publication. Even in a more controlled narrative, and again Holmes may serve as an example, there is a certain amount of information that is not directly relevant to the end in any one reading. An example of this is the information that Janet is the daughter of the head gamekeeper, which I noted in the analysis of "The Musgrave Ritual" on page 33.

finished the narrative (or is even re-reading it). This confidence underlies the provisional restructuring of the plot, which the reader performs while progressing through the text: the reader submits to the new information in the text in the confidence that there is a plan. The question then becomes, how is this confidence, and with it the desire for the end, created and maintained?

Structuration and expectation

This confidence in the end, which is the foundation for the desire for the end, is itself formed through the reader's progress through the text. It is based in the directional (the proairetic and the hermeneutic) codes' promise of order, which "blocks [the text's] reversibility" and "limits the plural nature of the classic text" (Barthes 1974:30). Both of these, as I have discussed above, structure the text according to, and towards, the end. When discussing the creation of expectation, however, Barthes' emphasis is on the rhythm of the hermeneutic code in particular: Barthes compares it to the expectation created by a pattern of rhyme in poetry, arguing that "just as rhyme ... structures the poem according to the expectation and desire for recurrence, so the hermeneutic terms structure the enigma according to the expectation and desire for its solution" (Barthes 1974:75): the identification of a pattern of reticence and revelation increases the confidence that the end will satisfy the desire for meaning. Because the various aspects of the hermeneutic code, as applied by the first-time reader, are provisional and subject to revision, however, the identification of an enigma and the expectation of its solution must also be due to expectations founded in the conventions of the genre the reader identifies the text as belonging to. That is to say,

the assumption that one is dealing with a formal detective story will fuel an expectation for a closely structured text, and when the text is found to confirm or support this impression, this in turn fuels the desire for the *anagnorisis* of the end. I will illustrate this genre expectation through a discussion of Dennis Porter's claim that "of all existing novel types, none provides an example of such perfect closure as the detective novel. … Its strong beginnings are matched by equally positive endings" (Porter 1981:219). Porter's *The Pursuit of Crime. Art and Ideology in Detective fiction* (1981) to some extent prefigures Brooks' *Reading for the Plot* (1984) in its emphasis on detective fiction and its plotting as a pattern based in desire for the end. Its main value for my analysis, however, is as a prime example of the power of expectations for the genre in determining how readers, including scholars, approach a text.

Central to Porter's argument is the idea of the detective genre as an especially ordered form of narrative, with its "perfect closure" and "positive endings", that is to say, a type of narrative which is particularly consonant, in which the end orders and makes sense of what has gone before. This not only considers the detective story to be more end-directed than other forms of narrative, which is in accordance with the classification of it as dominated by the hermeneutic code, but sees it as a text in which all aspects of the text contribute to, and are accounted for, in the ending. Porter is envisaging a narrative entirely subsumed by the control of the hermeneutic code. Like Kermode's claim that "all that seems fortuitous and contingent in what follows is in fact reserved for a later benefaction of significance in some concordant structure" (Kermode 1967:148), Porter's "perfect closure" is less an accurate description of any real text than it is an expression of a reader's expectation. This can be demonstrated to

be inaccurate as a description of some detective stories by a fairly cursory analysis of the Holmes stories: the description of the genre as closed by positive endings is quite easily disturbed.

The promise of a solution, in the Holmes stories, is based in the text providing the reader with the truth, the real solution to the mystery, thus dispelling the reader's need to fashion their own provisional plots by allowing them to discard their own in favour of the "real" solution. This requires the solution to be corroborated in some way. Sometimes, as in *A Study in Scarlet*, this is done by having Holmes' surmise confirmed by the confession of the guilty party. This novel in addition also supports this confession with a narrative by an omniscient third person narrator. It is therefore doubly corroborated: first by an admission of guilt, then by a narrative convention. Such control is not always available, however, as the reader must frequently rely on Holmes' powers of deduction alone and defer to him as an authority. This opens the text to a significant degree once this authority is put into question, as I will demonstrate in what follows.

"The Five Orange Pips" opens with a frank acknowledgement of the detective's limitations, as Watson writes about mysteries that "have baffled his analytical skill, and would be, as narratives, beginnings without endings, while others have been but partially cleared up and have their explanations founded rather upon conjecture and surmise than on that absolute logical proof which was so dear to him" (Doyle 1994a:102). What is more, the story has Holmes not only lose the client he has sworn to protect, but no confirmation that his theory is correct is available as his suspects disappear at sea. It thereby presents an example of one such mystery, only

founded “upon conjecture and surmise”. In “The Engineer’s Thumb”, moreover, the culprits once again escape justice, and while Holmes provides a very plausible reading of events, it is not independently confirmed. As I have already observed, the same can be seen in the *dénouement* of “The Musgrave Ritual”, where Homes offers a hypothesis he admits has no support apart from its plausibility. In all of these, then, the acceptance of the solution, and therefore the closure of the narrative, hinges on one’s acceptance of Holmes’ explanation.

There is, however, no proof compelling the reader to accept Holmes’ version of events, as the plausibility of the explanation, and Holmes’ authority as a master detective, is only proof of its *probability*; and seen in the context of other stories this plausibility becomes suspect: in “The Man With the Twisted Lip” Holmes comes to the entirely wrong conclusion, informing Mrs St Clair that he believes her husband to be dead, possibly murdered, when in fact he is alive and well. The most extreme example of Holmes’ fallibility, however, is found in “The Yellow Face”, in which the entire theory he presents, while covering all the facts, is glaringly wrong to the extent that it is set up as a cautionary tale: Holmes’ theory involves a sinister plot by a diseased husband to blackmail the wife who ran away from him and re-married. Watson’s observation that “[i]t is all surmise” (Doyle 1994c:68) is countered by Holmes’ “it covers all the facts” (Doyle 1994c:68). When it turns out that the woman has only been hiding a child from her previous marriage because of its skin colour, Holmes tells Watson that “if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little over-confident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper ‘Norbury’ in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you” (Doyle

1994c:72). Holmes' erroneous inference here gives the reader license to doubt his uncorroborated but plausible explanations elsewhere. It follows from this that simple plausibility, or Holmes' word, is not enough to consider the narrative closed. A closer look at the texts, then, undermines the portrayal of this seminal instance of the detective form as entirely controlled narrative with "positive endings".

The fact that Porter's claim with regard to the orderedness of the genre are not applicable to the texts that stand as the iconic example of the genre makes it all the more interesting to my investigation, however: it reveals an idealised convention that shapes the reader's expectations, like Kermode's description of end-determined narrative discussed on page 46. Porter's genre-specific claim illustrates how the reader approaches a certain type of narrative, detective fiction, with the assumption that it will be closely structured and able to account for any incongruences they encounter while reading it. The reader progressing through the text will form and revise plot hypotheses as new information is provided. While the text in actuality cannot be what Porter describes, his idea of a controlled text is precisely the ideal that the reader relies on as he or she restructures their provisional interpretations on their way through the text, what fuels the desire for the end as the place where one can look back and understand: the anticipated backwards glance of the end will see how all fits into the plot, and, more importantly, how all has contributed to it. A confidence in the end is based in a confidence in the orderedness of the narrative.

The "writerly" approach to the hermeneutic code

Even when Holmes cannot be proven right or wrong, if we approach it as a readerly text the force of the narrative will suggest that Holmes' theory, always very plausible and in coherence with the facts, is the correct one: the narrator is considered reliable unless something suggests otherwise, and so it would seem that the promise of a resolution to the enigma is provided if the reader does not purposefully set out to doubt and disprove it. This is not the perfect closure that Porter portrays in his analysis: it leaves avenues into the text which can be used in a "writerly" approach. But while perfect closure is not available, closure remains important. This becomes apparent in a reading like the one Pierre Bayard does in his *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong* (2008), where he focuses primarily on *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. While Bayard's plot is constructed in opposition to the apparent plot of the novel, the aim is still a closure through an ordered plot. As I will show here, Bayard's analysis consists in a writerly approach to the hermeneutic code. This is important in this context because it disturbs any facile connection between the author's intended plot and the satisfaction of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. Bayard's reading of *The Hound*, in producing a plot that runs counter to the more common reading in which Sherlock Holmes solves the mystery, rather than destroying the pattern of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, reinforces it by presenting the common reading as yet another false clue. However, while the writerly approach to the directional codes confirms the lack of an authorial control over the interpretation of plot, it also lays the ground for the reintroduction of a question of the author's authority over the creation of the *foundation* for interpretation, a question which will be at the centre of the next

section, and which will be developed further in my third chapter.

In practice Bayard's analysis involves establishing Watson as an unreliable narrator, not because of a perceived agenda, but because of his lack of understanding of the events that he observes. As Bayard points out, the narrative provides the reader only with the imperfect Watson's take on events: the narrative "does not relate the actions that occurred on the Devonshire moor or the investigation of Sherlock Holmes; it relates only these actions or this investigation *as Dr. Watson perceived them*" (Bayard 2008:71). Watson is not an omniscient narrator of the type found in the second narrative of *A Study in Scarlet*, but a character with well established flaws in terms of observation and deduction. Watson's erronous hypotheses are far from a surprise: they are a convention in their own right.[16] Its importance for Bayard, however, is that Watson's fallibility means that Watson's acceptance of Holmes' hypothesis cannot be taken as the endorsement of an authority. Bayard uses this to emphasise how Holmes is "one character among many" (Bayard 2008:77): it does not follow from Watson's acceptance of Holmes' interpretation of events that this interpretation is in fact the correct one. Bayard also emphasises *The Hound*'s reliance on multiple narratives, not all of which are always independently corroborated: "Watson often entrusts the narration to other characters, allowing their voices to tell the story. But their statements are often not directly verifiable" (Bayard 2008:75). Watson's endorsement of these narratives does not make them credible, and the caveat

[16]Ronald A. Knox' "Detective story Decalogue" (1928) lists as number nine on his list of detective story conventions that "[t]he stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind; his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader" (Knox 1980:202). Knox noted a number of conventions of the detective genre in his "Decalogue", most of which are directed against a *deus ex machina* solution; and the founding idea is that it should be possible for the reader to arrive at the solution before the *dénouement*, based on clues available in the text.

regarding the narrator who is also a character, and might therefore have an agenda, becomes all the more applicable when those narrating are also potential suspects. With this foundation Bayard goes on to produce a contrarian reading of Doyle's story, showing how it allows the reader to interpret the facts presented to construct a hypothesis very different from Holmes', even while applying Holmes' own methods (and without breaking the premises of the convention).[17] In short, he demonstrates how the text opens up to a very different story, one in which Stapleton is in fact the victim and Holmes the tool of the murderer: "the victim in Conan Doyle's book is executed with the complicity of Holmes, and without the murderer ever being bothered" (Bayard 2008:163). Bayard's new plot is one in which Charles Baskerville's death was an accident which Beryl Stapleton uses to have her husband killed so that she can marry Henry Baskerville, thereby providing a counterpoint to the woman killed by the Baskerville in the legend related by Dr. Mortimer. Bayard's alternative solution, then, operates not only strictly with the various functions of the hermeneutic code, but also makes use of a coherence with the other codes in order to reinforce the interpretation.

Bayard's reading of Doyle's text displays it as open to an understanding of the plot which runs counter to that proposed by the narrator and the detective. It thereby demonstrates that while it may be dominant, the hermeneutic code is not restrained by the intention of an author or fixed irrevocably by the declaration of a solution by

[17]By "premises of the convention" I mean that the solution does not defy logic or plausibility, it follows the logic of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* in the construction of plot, it eschews a *deus ex machina* solution or one where the murder is perpetrated by a random passer-by, and it treats the plot as end-determined. Most importantly, the solution is founded in the text, available to the reader as well as the detective. Some of these conventions are among those listed by Knox in his *Decalogue*, which, while not an accurate description of all detective stories, is a good example of the expectations that the genre works with.

Holmes and Watson. It, too, is open to a writerly approach to the text, even in a text purportedly determined by, and constructed according to the needs of, this very code. While the text promises a structuration directed towards the end, then, this structuration is open to a contrarian reader unwilling to passively follow the development of the narrative. Bayard's reading also raises interesting questions through its strict adherence to the text as he finds it. He is not interested in discovering the intended plot of Doyle: he explicitly states that "the hypothesis of detective criticism is that the writer himself is often misled. His work, in fact, necessarily escapes him, since, incomplete, it closes itself at every reading in ever different ways" (Bayard 2008:67-68).[18] That is to say, the gaps and openings that perforce exist in the text make it impossible for an author to control it, as every new reading completes it differently. Despite his acknowledged lack of interest in Doyle's intended plot, and an explicit desire to create an alternative, however, he submits to the text. By this I mean that he chooses to create a new plot in Doyle's foundation: rather than taking the characters of the one out of the already existing framework, the text as he encounters it is integral to his project. He has no interest in deviating from it, but sets out to work within it: the contrarian reading is based and justified precisely through its coherence with the text and the openings it provides; it is primarily a *reading*, albeit a "writerly" one. The major implication of Bayard's analysis in terms of the end is that a contrarian reading of this kind requires a sanctioned whole from which to read. This reliance on the text, while apparently self-evident when dealing with a finished text

[18]"Detective criticism" is Bayard's term for his contrarian reading focused on the hermeneutic code. It "intervenes in an active way, refusing to go along. ... The main premise of detective criticism is this: many of the murders narrated in literature were not committed by the people accused by the text" (Bayard 2008:59). It rejects the apparent solution to the enigma in order to arrive at another that will also be supported by a hermeneutic code in the text.

like *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, raises questions as to the authority of this sanction when faced with a more problematic example.

2.3 The function of the author

Doyle does not create a coherent world in which all the Holmes stories easily come together in a coherent whole readily available to a readerly approach to the text. There are constant references to stories that are never written and titles that are never used.[19] We find another example of this in Doyle's attempt at providing a final end to Holmes in "The Final Problem" (1893).[20] With Holmes' death at the Reichenbach falls, Doyle seemed to think he was done with him: in a letter to his mother, he very emphatically states that "the gentleman vanishes, never never to reappear" (Doyle 2007:319). More importantly, the narrative suggested that the detective was dead: at least that was the most prevalent interpretation, encouraged by an illustration on the page facing the

[19]This lack of coherence can hardly be taken as an indication of a deeply rooted anarchism in Doyle himself: it is due to the writing situation as anything but a pure and controlled moment of creation by an autonomous author. On the flip side, there is the example of "The Second Stain", which is a title Watson assigns to what is apparently two, possibly three different stories (only one of which is provided in narrative form, in 1904, under that title): it is mentioned in "The Yellow Face", where it is described as another story in which he "erred and yet the truth was still discovered" (Doyle 1994c:53), while in the introduction to "The Naval Treaty", he writes that "[n]o case … in which Holmes was ever engaged has illustrated the value of his analytical methods so clearly or has impressed those who were associated with him so deeply" (Doyle 1994d:213). These descriptions appear to be directly contradictory. The quote continues, "I still retain an almost verbatim report of the interview in which he demonstrated the true facts of the case to Monsieur Dubuque of the Paris Police, and Fritz von Waldebaum, the well-known specialist of Dantzig, both of whom had wasted their energies upon what proved to be a side issue" (Doyle 1994d:213). Neither character is mentioned in the story as finished, however. It is likely that this is a result of Doyle having a plot in mind which changed over time. See also the contradictory treatment of Moriarty in *Valley of Fear* and "The Final Problem" – the chronology within the fiction dictates that Watson must have heard Holmes refer to Moriarty in the former before answering Holmes' question of whether he has heard of him with "Never" in the latter.

[20]It is interesting to note in this context that "The Final Problem" can hardly be described as a detective novel at all. It is dominated by a proairetic sequence as Holmes and Watson attempt to escape the pursuing Moriarty. It could, however, be seen as an attempt to provide a final end to the series itself in that Holmes here presents Moriarty as the real meaning, the organising force, behind a number of earlier crimes. In keeping with this is also Holmes' assurance that having caused the downfall of Moriarty, "I have not lived wholly in vain" (Doyle 1994e:263). This entire short story would function as the *dénouement* to the collection of stories: we reach the end of the action and the final revelation of meaning in one.

very beginning of the story, captioned “The Death of Sherlock Holmes” (Doyle 1893:558).[21] Eight years later, however, came *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and in 1903 Doyle resurrected Holmes completely: in “The Empty House” the detective returns to London and announces he has never been dead at all. The importance of this set of circumstances lies in that the addition to the larger text of the Holmes canon retroactively changed the *possibilities* of interpretation of the foregoing text. While Bayard, as a contrarian reader, is free to read the text against the grain, he does this within the boundaries set by Doyle as author; and as author, Doyle is able to change these boundaries after the fact by introducing more texts to the Holmes canon. This is tied to the already discussed reader’s anticipation of retrospection, which continually revises provisional readings in view of new information. The later Holmes stories, as part of the same larger text of Holmes stories, retain the ability to change the meaning of what has gone before, much as a later chapter in a book would.

The reader’s confidence in the structured quality of the text encourages a search for coherence that fills in the gaps of the text in order to explain inconsistencies. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* illustrates this. It was published after Holmes had been killed and before his reappearance, but its internal chronology claims that it takes place before “The Final Problem”. It has, however, been pointed out that the text itself does not cohere with the chronology it pretends to be a part of: Martin D. Dakin, whose *Sherlock Holmes Commentary* (1972) discusses a wide variety of inconsistencies in the Holmes canon, points out that the stated internal

[21]Jacqueline Jaffe cites Charles Higham as writing that “not until the death of Queen Victoria seven years later was there such widespread mourning” and herself continues “As dramatic evidence of the extent of the national dismay, twenty thousand people immediately canceled their subscription of the Strand, while tens of thousands more wrote to the editor, the publisher and the author to complain” (Higham in Jaffe 1987:9).

chronology would place *The Hound* shortly after Watson's marriage, at a time when only *A Study in Scarlet* had been published (if we assume that the timing of Watson's publications on Holmes are to be considered as timed simultaneously with Doyle's publications of the stories, unless something else is specified, as Dakin does), and well before "The Norwood Builder" which is one of the post-Reichenbach stories, in which Lestrade finally accepts Holmes as someone to be deferred to. Yet Watson appears to be staying in Baker Street; there is no mention of his wife, even when he is unexpectedly asked to set off to Dartmoor for an undefined period of time (Doyle 1902:47); both Stapleton and Sir Henry (and the latter has been abroad most of his life) are well aware of who Holmes is, suggesting he is already famous; and, most importantly perhaps, Lestrade's attitude towards Holmes is one of respect and deference (Dakin 1972:147). Watson writes: "I saw at once from the reverential way in which Lestrade gazed at my companion that he had learned a good deal since the days when they had first worked together" (Doyle 1902:146). As I indicated above, Lestrade's scepticism with regards to Holmes' theories does not cease until after the hiatus. Once again, then, a close look at the narrative causes Watson to lose his position as the transparent narrator to be trusted, and readers have as a result begun looking for reasons why Watson would lie about the date or the circumstances. Dakin endorses G. Basil Jones' in-story explanation that Holmes was unwilling for the story of his resurrection to be revealed until later and had only given Watson permission to write the story of *The Hound* if a fictitious date were set (Dakin 1972:147-149).[22]

[22]To corroborate this he quotes Watson's apology to the reader in "The Empty House", in which he writes that he has only held back on writing of Holmes' survival and subsequent adventures because the latter had prohibited it (Dakin 1972:148). There are also examples of readers who do not accept the resurrection of Holmes without question. In Ronald A. Knox' essay, "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes" (1928), he argues that Holmes really died at Reichenbach. The post-Reichenbach stories are therefore a forgery. But only as concerns Holmes. The forger, according to this argument, is

This attempt at explanation is indicative of the desire to make narrative coherent. While the inconsistencies could have been dismissed as a result of Doyle's slipping up, readers accept what they are given and attempt to make it non-contradictory. The text, then, is approached as a sanctioned whole from which the reader can glean whatever meaning that can be produced in it. This sub-chapter will move forwards from this understanding, which can also be encountered in the context of Bayard, and confront it with the text that is added to retroactively by its author. This will lead me to a discussion of the function of the author as retaining creative authority, which will in turn allow me to discuss what is meant by unfinished narrative, a term which is crucial to my discussion in the remaining chapters.

The authority to end

When Doyle finished "The Final Problem", Holmes was presumed dead, not only to the multitude of grieving readers, but to all appearances to its author as well. Doyle had been planning to kill him for years, and appears to have seen the death of Holmes as the only way to escape having him take over his life and work.[23] To most readers, Holmes was dead. After "The Empty House", however, Holmes had always only been in hiding, travelling in Tibet under the name Siegerson. Holmes died at Reichenbach; now he never did, and "The Final Problem" now ends with Holmes out of sight, but no longer dead.[24] My use of grammar here is deliberate, and is meant to emphasise

Watson, who therefore remains as authentic as ever (Knox 1928).

[23]This is not the place to discuss Doyle's relationship with his most famous creation. It is generally known that he considered Holmes stories a less worthy pursuit than his historical novels, and was not happy that he got less recognition for the latter.

[24]This was always a possible interpretation, since no body was found. I have chosen to formulate it in this way because that better reflects the public understanding of the text at the time. With regard to the openness of interpretative possibilities, however, it might now be better said that Holmes could be interpreted as having died at Reichenbach; now that interpretation is no longer possible without

the change in the import of the ending to "The Final Problem", which occurred when Doyle wrote "The Empty House". The new information forced a revision of the plot because the text that had been finished a few years earlier (the Holmes corpus) was now continuing. This requires explanation. The reader accepts the author's authority to posit the ending he chooses to the text, regardless of his original intention. And even though the changes he makes are dictated, not by some particular necessity of the story, but rather by outside demands, his version stands as authoritative. As do its implications for how we read what has gone before. This new authorial text postpones the ending, and reintroduces the necessity for the reader to revise their understanding of events according to this new information.

Returning to my discussion of Bayard, his book is only ever directed against the *interpretative* authority of the author. His emphasis on gaps in the text is merely a recognition of the range of the reader's liberty of interpretation; and while he affirms the independence of characters, his reading of *The Hound* makes it clear that their scope of "independent" action is limited to those gaps which the text leaves for the reader to fill in. They are always in accordance with, bound by, what the text provides: Bayard submits to the author's authority to lay the foundation for interpretation. He reads the plot of Doyle's book counter to what a "readerly" reading would produce, but he never questions the boundary of that reading, what he takes as his starting point: the words of the text. What makes possible Bayard's new plot is precisely the end provided by Doyle, in which Stapleton is (presumed) dead: the plausibility of his theory is based in its consonance with what the text provides.

Combined with the perception of Doyle's authority to change the ending (or

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additional explanation to account for Watson's untruthfulness.

the import of the ending) of “The Final Problem” after the fact, Bayard’s submission to the text as it stands would seem to confirm that the reader does not normally challenge the creative authority of the author, certainly not in the finished text. The question of this authority does not even arise in the analysis of the finished narrative, but forms the basis for the tendency I have remarked on since page 30: while we read, we create provisional plots which we then discard or revise in accordance with new information in the text. The boundaries of the text, or foundations for those readings, become naturalised and therefore invisible. But as this analysis has shown, this revision, based in a confidence in the text as structured towards an end, is a submission to the authority of the author to provide the boundaries (or the foundation) for our understanding of events.

The problem of the intended end to the text only becomes salient in the context of the unfinished narrative. More importantly, it is what allows us to speak of unfinished narrative to begin with: if, in the reader’s encounter with the text, this perceived creative authority played no part, there would be nothing unfinished. The boundaries of the text would form the whole from which the reader could then proceed to construct coherence; only as a part of an intended larger, complete, whole can a text be thought of as incomplete. While the reader is not bound by the understanding of the plot as intended by the author, and is free to make use of any code they like in order to produce meaning in the text, the proliferation of meaning takes as its starting point a text produced by what may include the intervention of editors, accidents, changes due to financial concerns and other factors, but which, when published as a finished whole, holds the sanction which reading relies on. It

should be clear, then, that the historical individual whose name we use to designate the author of the book, is not identical with this "author"; but my analysis in subsequent chapters suggests that the historical individual is still central to the perception of this authority, which confers the right to change and add to the text.

2.4 Conclusion

Understanding unfinished narratives, or unfinished plots, depends on understanding what makes them different from finished narratives: the lack of an ending and that which the ending contributes. The end of the text is integral to the construction of meaning, both as what is anticipated during the reading process, and also as the point at which the revision of interpretations can stop and the functions of the hermeneutic code can be posited. This is true of texts in general, but can be seen to be of particular importance in the reading of narratives dominated by the hermeneutic code, such as the detective novel. My analysis makes use of the terms *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* in order to describe the expectations of a twist and a revelation in the end, characterised by disconfirmation and consonance.

The desire for the end of the text is based in the confidence that the ending will provide the moment of *anagnorisis*. In the expectation of this moment of understanding, the reader will continuously produce and revise provisional interpretations of the text while reading; but these provisional interpretations are then discarded when they are confronted with new information in the text. This confidence in the end is based in the perception of the plot as structured towards the end, but does not necessarily submit to the apparent plot, as Pierre Bayard's reading of *The Hound*

of the Baskervilles suggests.

Even in a reading which runs against the grain of the narrative, however, the experience of *anagnorisis* relies on the boundaries of the text as much as the gaps within it. While the author's authority of interpretation may be rejected, therefore, the authorial function that sanctions the unity of the text remains. This authorial creative authority is also the basis for the idea of the "unfinished text": one cannot speak of a text as unfinished without a conception of a creative intention for more. The question of this authority will be developed further in my third chapter. First, however, I will explore what happens when the historical individual designated as "author" dies without having provided such a sanctioned ending to the text.

3 Authority in the unfinished serial narrative

> Mr. Grewgious seeing nothing there, not even a light in the windows, his gaze wandered from the windows to the stars, as if he would have read in them something that was hidden from him. Many of us would if we could; but none of us so much as know our letters in the stars yet – or seem likely to, in this state of existence – and few languages can be read until their alphabets are mastered. (Dickens 1982:160)

The author may be dead; but what happens when he dies before he has finished his work as author? This is the concern of this chapter. This is not an uncommon occurrence, and unfinished narratives abound in the history of literature. It is well known that Vergil did not consider the *Aeneid* to be finished, desiring it to be burnt upon his death; in more modern times, the same story can be found in relation to Kafka's *The Trial*. In both cases, the works were only saved for posterity by the intervention of others (Augustus and Max Brod, respectively). Less dramatically, both *The Watsons* and *Sanditon* were left unfinished by Jane Austen; *Canterbury Tales* was never finished by Geoffrey Chaucer, who had intended a work twice as long; and most major serial novelists, including Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope and Robert Louis Stevenson, left behind unfinished novels when they died. The heterogeneity of this plethora of unfinished narratives is masked by an ambiguity in the word "unfinished", however. They are different, in part, in their degree of finishedness: *Sanditon* is markedly more unfinished than *The Aeneid*, for example; *Edwin Drood* can be located somewhere between the two.

In addition to this, however, I would argue that the difference is also due to a difference in the type of unfinishedness. When I discuss unfinished texts in this chapter, I will mainly be referring to texts whose plots or narratives are *incomplete*,

rather than those whose narration is *unpolished*. By unpolished I mean that the text is not fleshed out and readied for publication: a plot sketch would be the prime example of a very unpolished narrative. A provisional scale of unpolishedness would stretch from the sketch to the proofed and published work, the latter forming a purely conventional cut-off point. I must stress that any scale of polishedness is a highly provisional tool, and should not be taken as a valuation of quality. It is impossible to give any fixed ranking of polishedness, and my placement of them in figure 1 should be taken solely as an approximation in the interest of illustrating my point, which is to distinguish polishedness from completeness. By unfinished, or uncompleted, texts, conversely, I mean texts where the plot is incomplete. Illustration 1, below, illustrates my distinction between degrees of polishedness and degrees of completeness.

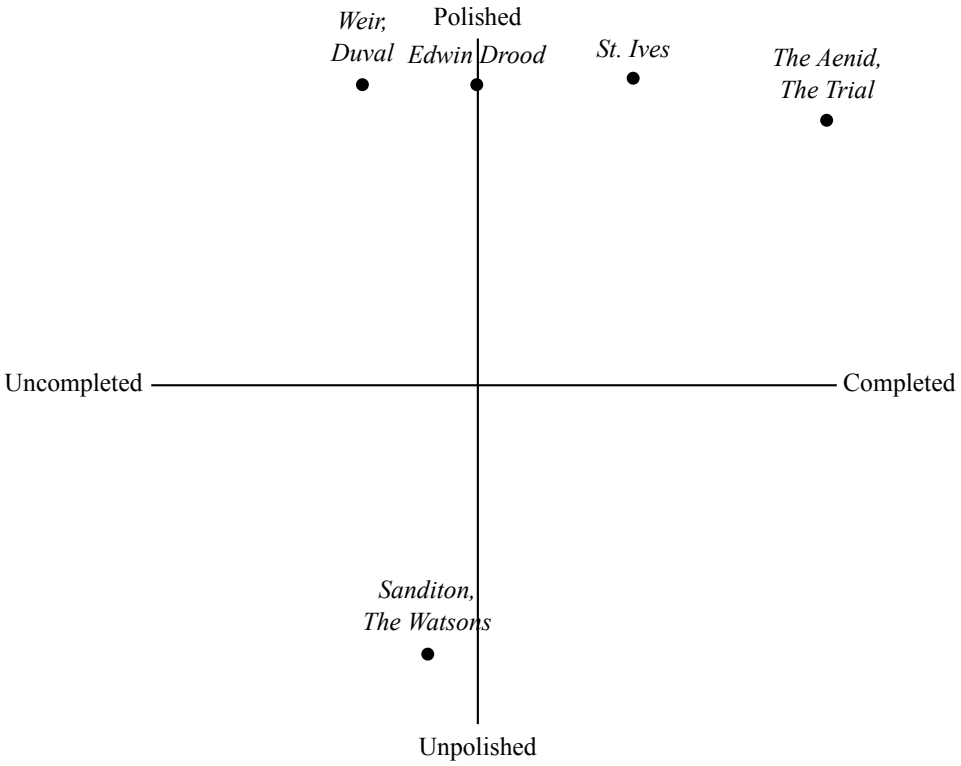

Illustration 1: Types of unfinished narratives

These two types of unfinishedness can be present to varying degrees in different types

of unfinished narrative texts. Jane Austen's two texts are to a large degree unfinished in both senses: they are plot sketches, partially without fleshed out narration; but the plot sketches themselves are also incomplete. At the other extreme are *The Aeneid* and *The Trial*, both of which appear to a large extent finished in both senses. Different from both the merely unpolished works and the plot sketches at the other extreme, are the type of unfinished narrative which is polished, but incomplete. The prime example of this type of narrative is Dickens' *Edwin Drood*, which is proofed and polished, but which only constitutes half of Dickens' intended plot.[25]

The focus of this chapter, and central to the rest of this thesis, will be the unfinished products of serial or part publication in the mid- to late-Victorian period. These are more fruitful in this context because this form of publication, (more than a novel published as a stand-alone text), more commonly lends itself to the production of a polished beginning and middle without an ending – that is, a polished, but incomplete, narrative. This is so because a serial narrative will frequently have been published in sections, written while the serial was still being published. In which case, the first instalments might be fleshed out and ready for publication while the final part would not yet have been written or even planned. This was not a universal practice, but it was common practice to begin publishing a serial before the whole text was written.[26] The serial was a form that frequently offered little incentive for finishing a

[25]While Chaucer's *Tales* cannot be placed in this diagram, it can be described with the terms which the diagram is designed to illustrate. It is a series of completed, and mainly polished, works in an incomplete context: Chaucer's *Tales* consist of a series of finished stories. The frame narrative is incomplete, as is the sequence of stories (there should have been more of them). Because Chaucer's work is a collection of tales, however, the fragment still provides coherent, finished plots within it. Similarly, *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales* by J. R. R. Tolkien, both of which were published posthumously, provide an unfinished context for the finished novels published in the author's lifetime. The variety in types of unfinished fictional writing and their implications cannot be exhaustively discussed here, however.

[26]Anthony Trollope objected to this practice in his *Autobiography*, where he stated that "an artist should keep in his hand the power of fitting the beginning of a work to the end" (Trollope 1883:185).

novel before publication started. John Sutherland's analysis of the publication of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) is telling in this connection: Thackeray was working under a contract which did not specify any particular number of instalments, meaning that the serial could be terminated at any time if it turned out to be unprofitable for the publisher. Any long term planning would therefore in this situation be unprofitable for Thackeray, as there was no guarantee that an elaborately constructed plot would have the space to run its course. Moreover, Thackeray was not paid except on publication of each issue, and so it was not in his interest to be far ahead of the printers in his writing of the serial (Sutherland 1976:101-2).[27] In order to illustrate how this form of publication affected the structure of the novel, Sutherland compares this situation to Thackeray's *Henry Esmond*, which was initially published and constructed in the form of a three-volume novel. He argues that this encouraged a greater scope for his planning and re-editing, and the result is what Sutherland describes as a "'careful' book" which "escapes any criticism of its structure" (Sutherland 1976:62, 104).[28] This is presumably because this form provides the opportunity to go back over the finished manuscript and make changes to increase

Trollope himself broke this rule, however: he had arranged to begin publishing his unfinished *Landleaguers* in November 1882, the year he died. Despite Sutherland's claim that Trollope's novel was found in a drawer when he died (Sutherland 1974:111), it had started publication in *Life* when the manuscript was found unfinished on his death. The publication starts on November 16th 1882, only thirteen days after his stroke, and well before his death on December 6th, and preparations for the publication must have begun before he fell ill. *The Landleaguers* is much closer to completion than Dickens' *Edwin Drood*, however.

[27]For the purposes of this thesis it is significant that the case of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* is fairly extreme compared to Dickens' later novels, at which point Dickens was able to dictate terms and plan ahead. Even for *Dombey and Son*, which was published concurrently with *Vanity Fair* (and by the same publisher), Dickens had a contract to produce 20 monthly parts, and could therefore plan the progress of his plot in a way that Thackeray could not (Cf. Sutherland 1976:102). While Thackeray's case illustrates the reason for the particular form of an unfinished serial narrative, then, it does not follow that all authors faced the same uncertain working conditions in this period.

[28]Even Trollope, who objected to Thackerays way of writing serials, described *Henry Esmond* as "the first and finest novel in the English language" in his essay on the occasion of Thackeray's death (Trollope 1864:136).

coherence, in addition to a greater scope for forward planning.[29] The serial may have been safer for the publishers in that the investment could be cut short if there proved to be no demand, but conversely the inherent risk for the publisher in a form like the serial, where the author is not under contract to complete his text before publication begins, is that if the author is indisposed, publication can be interrupted.[30] And if the author dies, publication could be cut short altogether.

Almost all the major serial novelists left behind an unfinished novel of this kind (whether already being published or not), but perhaps the most famous such case is that of Charles Dickens' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870): Dickens died when three out of a planned twelve parts had been published, leaving three more ready for publication and no plans outlining the end to his plot. Now, 142 years later, there are many proposed endings, but still no trace of an undisputed, authoritative one. The mass of writing on the subject makes it evident that there is a public desire for resolution which has not been satisfied. This will be the focus of the last two chapters of this thesis.

Michael Lund, in his discussion of unfinished Victorian novels in his *Reading Thackeray* (1988), argues that

> Because they were accustomed to fragments (individual monthly or weekly installments) within the major publication format of their times, Victorians found the parts of *Duval*, *Drood* and *The Landleaguers* significant literary works even though their full stories would never appear. . . . [In reading, they] assumed that fragments were naturally elements of an entire design, a design so accepted it need not actually be seen. (Lund 1988:15-16)

[29]It is worth noting at this time the tendency, seen both in Trollope and in Sutherland, towards favouring the coherent, plotted, narrative over that presenting a string of episodes. This preference for wholeness has already been touched on in my first chapter, and will be discussed further in my fourth.

[30]There is a gap of one month in the publication of Dickens' *Pickwick* and *Oliver Twist*, because his sister-in-law died in June 1837; and a three-month gap in the publication of Thackeray's *Pendennis* due to the author's illness (Law and Patten 2009:n14 151).

However, within the form of serial publication the reception of unfinished novels still varies greatly. Some are neglected and left unread; others become the focus of obsessive interest. While *Edwin Drood* has engendered a large volume of speculation, sequels and heated debate, other unfinished novels (including serials) are passed over in comparative silence by readers and critics alike.[31] This chapter will explore the possible reasons for the intense interest in the missing ending in some cases and the absence of this interest in others. I will discuss why other unfinished novels do not receive the same attention as *Edwin Drood* by comparing it to William Makepeace Thackeray's *Denis Duval* (1864) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Weir of Hermiston* (1896) and *St. Ives* (1897).

It must be noted that comparing any other writer to Dickens is problematic. According to *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Dickens had "the most successful and influential career in all of the nineteenth century" (Leary and Nash 2009:175).[32] But while Dickens may have been "inimitable"[33], Patrick Leary and Andrew Nash present Thackeray as "his nearest competitor for popular and critical status in the late 1840s and 1850s" (Leary and Nash 2009:176); he is therefore the

[31]At the opposite extreme to *Edwin Drood* is Alexandre Dumas' final novel, *Hector de Saint-Hermine* (1896), which in its unfinished state fell into obscure oblivion, only to be "rediscovered" as late as 2005. The current reception of which is itself interesting in a finished/unfinished context: Claude Schopp depicts Dumas' oeuvre as a cathedral lacking the keystone (therefore itself unfinished) until the discovery of *Hector de Sainte-Hermine*, which has been renamed *Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine* (Schopp 2008:787-790). He claims that the greater project of writing historical novels covering a specific period of history was itself unfinished, but would have been completed with this novel. It can, then, be seen as the diametrical opposite of Chaucer's unfinished project: there the individual parts are finished, but the context lacking; here the context is complete, lacking only this one, unfinished piece.

[32]From *Pickwick* on Dickens' special status is apparent. It sold in the 40,000s in the later issues (where the very first had sold weakly). *Nicholas Nickleby* sold to 50,000 per issue. *Edwin Drood*, according to Forster, sold that same number of copies of the first issue already before Dickens died (Forster 1874:424). Compared to this, the *Cornhill* sold less than this even when Thackeray's last novel was running, and those numbers would have included material by other authors.

[33]Forster records an anecdote of a teacher, Mr Giles, who sent Dickens a silver snuff box inscribed to "the inimitable Boz" (Forster 1872:13). This seems to be the origin of the epithet, which is frequently applied.

most obvious candidate for comparison. Stevenson, who died a quarter of a century after Dickens, may appear to be less so. He does, however, offer that combination of quality and popularity which could be found in both Dickens and Thackery: George Saintsbury, writing to justify his inclusion of Stevenson in his *Nineteenth Century Literature*, published only a year after Stevenson's death, calls him "the most brilliant and interesting by far, … of those English writers whose life was comprised in the last half of the century" (Saintsbury 1896:339). Stevenson is the last entry in Saintsbury's treatment of novelists, suggesting his popularity at the time of his death as well as his tentative placement as canonical. Moreover, Thackeray died in 1864 and Stevenson in 1894, placing them on either side of 1870, when Dickens died. This makes them fruitful in a comparative study meant to clarify the reception of *Edwin Drood*, as tendencies that can be traced in the reception of both these authors could justifiably be expected to also apply to 1870 and what follows. My primary reason for focusing on these two novelists, however, is their usefulness in illustrating the different reactions to the unfinished novels, and that they allow me to propose some reasons for the special position of *Edwin Drood*.

The purpose of this chapter is to place *Edwin Drood* in a context of other unfinished works, and to ask what sets it apart in an attempt to isolate some traits which may contribute to a greater understanding of Droodiana. I will begin by giving a short overview of the extent to which the reception of *Edwin Drood* differs from that of the other unfinished texts, both in nature and in the sheer volume of texts generated in response to what is perceived as the puzzle of the plot. I will then go on to analyse the individual cases of each unfinished text in turn. By looking at how the four novels

were published, the structure of the novels, and the authority of what is known or not known about their unfinished endings, I will attempt to explain the mode of their reception and begin my discussion of why Dickens' *Edwin Drood* has become such a special case.

In the case of Thackeray, I will take my starting point from the editor's notes[34] appended to the end of the fragment of *Denis Duval* published in the June 1864 issue of *Cornhill Magazine*, and in turn the focal point of these notes: an early letter sent by Thackeray to George Smith, outlining the plot of the novel. I will show how the use of historical fact restricts Thackeray's liberty in constructing the story, and grounds Greenwood's speculation as to what would have happened had the manuscript been completed. I will then analyse the structure of the fragment, and show that its episodic plot and continual emphasis on the stated happy ending would undermine any desire for further speculation on the side of the plot that is not grounded in historical fact.

Following this, I will go on to discuss two very different works by Stevenson: *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston*. In my discussion of *St. Ives* my main concern will be the existence of an authoritative completion of Stevenson's text by another hand (that of Arthur Quiller-Couch), and why the validity of this completion was not challenged until almost a hundred years after its initial publication. My analysis of the reception of *Weir* will be informed by my discussion of *St. Ives* in that I will ask why the one was finished by another hand and the other not. In answering this question I will also discuss the possible reasons for the slight controversy over how *Weir* would have

[34]These notes have conventionally been attributed to Frederick Greenwood, who functioned as editor after Thackeray left the position. However, John Aplin, in his "'Of Papa Always and Always'. Thackeray's Daughter and the Early Publishing History of *Denis Duval*", makes a very convincing argument to the effect that it was in fact Thackeray's daughter, Anne Thackeray Ritchie, who wrote the notes for *Cornhill*. Despite this I have chosen to follow the convention and consistently refer to them as Greenwood's notes in this chapter in order to avoid confusion.

ended.

In my final discussion, which will centre on the publication context of *Edwin Drood*, I will then draw on the foregoing analysis and show how *Edwin Drood* differs from these other unfinished texts, both in its early publishing history and the exceptional status of its author; but perhaps more importantly, in the lack of an accepted authorial plan, and the perceived genre of the text.

3.1 The singular nature of Droodiana

Edwin Drood, like many of Dickens' other books, was published in the form of monthly numbers, issued in parts; at the time of his death three of an intended eleven parts, the last of which was to be a double number, had been published; two more were ready for publication, and another was one chapter short of completion.[35] These posthumous parts were all published in due course, and the result is a text which stops almost exactly in the middle of the author's intended work. Dickens did not leave any notes or plans for the final chapters among his papers; and while John Forster later offered a plot outline which he claimed was authorial, it was dismissed by a number of late Victorian and Edwardian readers, especially, and has rarely been taken as exhaustive. The reception of Dickens' *Edwin Drood* is a singular phenomenon without any obvious parallels in the history of literature: the number of texts written in response to the unfinished text, as well as the variety in the plots proposed, set it apart. The overwhelming textual production, following the death of Dickens, of works which attempt to disentangle the plot of the novel, is commonly referred to as

[35] *Edwin Drood* was published in parts at the cost of one shilling per number (this, incidentally, was the same price as *Pickwick* and all Dickens' other novels published in this form throughout his career). Each number consisted of 32 pages and two illustrations, and was published with a green wrapper containing an illustration by Luke Fildes, which can be seen on page 189.

"Droodiana". There was never an official or authorised completion of *Edwin Drood* by another hand; Chapman and Hall, Dickens' publishers, denied the possibility of such a completion two weeks after Dickens' death (Chapman and Hall 1870).[36] A number of unauthorised completions have, however, been published.

The first completion could be said to be a conclusion to a parody that had been running concurrently with Dickens' own publications in the USA.[37] It was followed by a more earnest completion in 1871, and to date I have identified eleven such completions.[38] This number only includes published fictions which carry on from where Dickens' text ends, and which do so in something approaching Dickens' style. These are texts which do not usually attempt to justify their conclusions and developments outside the scope of the narrative itself. In addition to these eleven, one might count Kerr's parody and several other fictional variations on the mystery of the novel (including at least twelve Holmesian pastiches).[39] The main body of Droodian activity can be found in another avenue, however: at least 14 full books dedicated to speculations on the fragment's intended ending (not counting the speculations that only form parts of books on other topics or scholarly treatments of the subject, although the line between scholarship and speculation is often a blurred one), and at

[36]The rumours of such a completion by another hand took a long time to die, however: as late as twelve years later, in 1882, according to Kitton, there were rumours that Wilkie Collins intended to complete the text, followed by rumours that he had been invited to complete it, but had declined (Kitton 1897:226).

[37]When Dickens died, its author, Robert N. Newell under the name Orpheus C. Kerr, wrapped up his version by having Jasper be innocent of any crime and Drood return to general rejoicing (Kerr 1870:270-9).

[38]These completions and their implications will be discussed more fully in my third chapter.

[39]These fictional variations are texts in which the mystery of Dickens' novel is treated, but which makes no pretense at providing a completion of the fragment. They are texts complete in themselves and can function both on the meta-level (where a fictional character is confronted with Dickens' unfinished plot) and at the level of the fiction itself (where the narrative level corresponds to the level of Dickens' text), or, indeed, both. The Holmesian pastiches are texts in which Sherlock Holmes is confronted with the mystery, and can take the form of both types of fictional variations.

least 455 articles on the subject in literary magazines and newspapers.[40] As I will discuss more fully later in this chapter, Dickens' biographer and the executor of his will, John Forster, offered a plot outline which he claimed Dickens had given him; but this plot has been rejected by a number of speculation writers, and rather than settle any dispute as an authority, as I will argue in my fourth chapter, Forster's outline may have served as the starting point for Droodian speculation itself.

In comparison, both Thackeray's and Stevenson's unfinished novels have received relatively little attention from readers and critics alike, and neither has provoked anything like the volume of textual production seen in connection with *Edwin Drood*. After a brief period of commentary immediately following their authors' demise, it would seem that further attention was only given to these incomplete texts when they were republished in collected or scholarly editions of Stevenson's or Thackeray's works. Thackeray had not yet started the publication of his new serial, *Denis Duval*, when he died on Christmas Eve 1863, but it was set to start publication in the new year, and the *Cornhill* decided to publish the unfinished serial as far as it had been completed, starting in March 1864.[41] In June of that year the final part was published along with ten pages of notes by "the editor" of the *Cornhill*. The notes discuss how the story might have continued and emphasise its

[40]It should be stressed that these numbers are not exhaustive. Don Richard Cox' *Annotated Bibliography* lists most, but not all, of the texts I have found, and there are inevitably texts that have eluded us both. These speculations will be more fully discussed in my fourth chapter.

[41]Already in October of 1863, the *Athenaeum* reported that "Mr Thackeray is about to break new ground in his forthcoming novel in the *Cornhill Magazine*" (Athenaeum 1863:501). This rumour is probably a reference to the story circulating that the novel would "relate to a very early period of English history, and will consequently be altogether different from his previous productions," as the *Publishers' Circular* reported in November of the same year (Publishers' Circular 1863a:594). And the fly-leaf of the January number of the *Cornhill* had announced the beginning of the story "early in the new year" (Publishers' Circular 1863b:800). There was therefore a certain amount of expectation, but it would have been tempered with the knowledge at the beginning of the reading, that it would not be complete.

connection to historical fact, including how certain characters in the story were based on real historical personages. Greenwood's stated objective was to dismiss the idea of Thackeray as a desultory, unstructured writer by showing how much work he had put into the research for the book. In so doing he provided a sketch for the completed story, and I cannot find that this plot outline has ever been contested.[42]

The reception of Stevenson's unfinished texts is a little more varied than that of *Duval*, but it, too, falls short of the volume of textual production sparked by *Edwin Drood*. Despite being left unfinished by its author, *St. Ives* was published in completed form, with the final chapters furnished by Arthur Quiller-Couch. Unlike the (unauthorised) *Edwin Drood* completions, however, this completion was not challenged by Edwardian readers. An alternative completion based on historical research was written in 1990 by Jenni Calder, but it has not sparked a reaction of other completions or speculations, or much attention of any kind. As regards *Weir of Hermiston*, there was never any attempt at completion; but unlike *Duval* and *St. Ives*, it has caused some debate regarding how the plot would have been resolved. This debate, however, seems to have been limited to the introductory sections of various editions of the book, and has not spread to the letters columns of newspapers or longer discussions in literary journals.

The numbers alone suggest that the reception of *Edwin Drood* is in a special position compared to other unfinished serials of the same period. The purpose of this chapter is to discover what sets it apart. In order to establish what aspects of the text contribute to its special status, however, I must first look more closely at these other

[42] Although several scholars, among them John Sutherland and John Aplin, have sought to produce a fuller understanding of the notes and letter used by Greenwood (or, as Aplin convincingly argues, Anne Thackeray Ritchie).

texts.

3.2 Thackeray – *Denis Duval*

In this analysis of the publication of Thackeray's unfinished novel, I will show how the main enigma of the plot is restricted by historical fact, and how this in turn makes it possible for Greenwood to state with some authority how Thackeray's plot would have developed, despite the fact that Thackeray's description of his fictional characters does not remain unchanged in the transition from early plan to finished chapters. I will also show, through an analysis of parts of *Duval*, why the non-factual parts of the narrative would not encourage speculation.

Sutherland writes that when Thackeray took on the editorship of the *Cornhill*, he "was at this time the second most famous novelist in England" (Sutherland 1976:76). The author he was second to was of course Charles Dickens.[43] He would therefore seem to be a natural choice for comparison. Thackeray's novel, moreover, presents itself as ideal for comparison because of its very limited amount of speculation following the publication of the work. Because Thackeray's status is the closest to that of Dickens, this suggests the reason for this difference in reception can

[43]It is not an easy task to provide a comparison of the two, mainly because of the varied forms of publication (comparing the sales of the issues of the *Cornhill* where Thackeray's novels featured along with others, to the sales of the part issues of some of Dickens' novels is problematic because a reader of the *Cornhill* would also get other texts in each issue).

Even comparing the *Cornhill* to *All the Year Round* is problematic, because their sales strategies were dissimilar. Sutherland writes that *All the Year Round*'s "sales strategy was … quite different from that of the *Cornhill*, its great rival, which every month for 1s. sported a host of great names. Readers of the *Cornhill* in 1860, if Trollope's serial did not please, could turn to Thackeray's … . Galactic profusion was Smith's method; the single, star turn Dickens's" (Sutherland 1976:171). But while both journals started off with a circulation of around 100,000 (both appear to have reached 120,000 in their sales of the first number (Sutherland 1976:86), *Cornhill* quickly fell to half that, while Sutherland reports that Dickens' journal is supposed to have reached 300,000 at times (Sutherland 1976:168). Sheer numbers also provide an idea: Robert L. Patten shows that Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* at its best hovered around 9,500 issues of one number sold in the period July 1846-49, whereas Dickens hovered around 34,000 (Cf. Patten 1970:773).

be found in an analysis of the text and the mode of its publication.

The *Cornhill* famously began with 100,000 published copies in its first month, January 1860. By 1863, however, it had more than halved its circulation.[44] Thackeray left the editorship in April 1862, but continued to contribute to the journal. In December 1863 the circulation had reached a low of 41,250. After Thackeray's death in Christmas of 1863, the circulation increased markedly in the beginning of 1864, to 44,500 in February[45]. Sutherland attributes this increase to "affection for Thackeray among lapsed subscribers" (Sutherland 1986:107). And the high point of sales in this period, 45,000 in March, coincides with the publication of the first instalment of *Denis Duval*, which ran from March to June that year, constituting about half of the intended novel.[46] The immediate reaction was not sustained, however, and there is a dropping off in April's run of 43,500, but it stabilised at 42,500 in May and June, when the final instalment was published. The drop to 42,000 in July and 41,000 in August, however, is marginally sharper, and this would seem to support Sutherland's surmise.

The final instalment of *Denis Duval* was published in June together with Greenwood's notes, which make use of Thackeray's papers and letters to make sense of the story as it might have developed. The foundation for Greenwood's speculations is a letter from Thackeray to George Smith[47], the owner of *Cornhill*, in which he describes the story as one of "[n]o moral reflections and plenty of adventures", before

[44]I take these numbers from John Sutherland's analysis of *Cornhill* sales over its first decade (Sutherland 1986).

[45]February's issue contained an "In Memoriam" for Thackeray by Dickens (Dickens 1864). There was also an essay on Thackeray by Trollope (Trollope 1864).

[46]Aplin cites the original contract, from February 1863, which stipulates 8 parts of 24 pages each (Aplin 2004:328).

[47]Harden dates this letter to January 14 1863 (Thackeray 1994:1109-11).

embarking on a sketch of the plot in the same first person singular style used in the narrative:

> I was born in the year 1764 at Winchelsea where my father was a grocer and a clerk of the church. Every body in the place was a good deal connected with smuggling.
>
> There used to come to our house a very noble French gentleman called the COUNT DE LA MOTTE and with him a German the BARON DE LÜTTERLOH. My father used to take packages to Ostend and Calais for these 2 gentlemen, and perhaps I went to Paris once and saw the French Queen.
>
> The Squire of our town was SQUIRE WESTON OF THE PRIORY who with his brother kept one of the genteelest houses in the Country. He was churchwarden of our church & much respected.
>
> Yes, but if you read the Annual Register of 1781 you will find that on the 13 July, the Sheriffs attended at the TOWER OF LONDON to receive custody of A. DE LA MOTTE a prisoner charged with High Treason.
>
> The fact is this Alsatian nobleman being in difficulties in his own country (Where he had commanded the regiment Soubise) came to London, & under pretense of sending prints to France & Ostend, supplied the French Minister with accounts of the movements of the English fleets and troops. His go between was LÜTTERLOH, a Brunswicker who had been a crimping agent then a Servant, who was a spy to France & Mr. Franklin and who turned Kings Evidence on Lamotte and hanged him.
>
> This Lütterloh who had been a crimping agent for German troops during the American, then a servant in London during the Gordon riots, then an agent for a spy, then a spy over the spy – I suspect to have been a consummate scoundrel and double odious for speaking English with a German accent.
>
> What if he wanted to marry THAT CHARMING GIRL who lived with Mrs. Weston at Winchelsea? Ha! I see a mystery here.
>
> What, if this Scoundrel going to receive his pay from the English Admiral with whom he was in communication at Portsmouth happened to go on board THE ROYAL GEORGE the day she went down.
>
> As for John & Joseph Weston of the Priory I am sorry to say they were rascals too. They were tried for robbing the Bristol Mail in 1780; and being acquitted for want of evidence were tried immediately on another indictment for forgery. Joseph was acquitted but George capitally convicted. But this did not help poor Joseph. Before their trials they and some others broke out of Newgate and Joseph fired at & wounded a porter who tried to stop him on Snow Hill For this he was tried & found guilty on the Black Act and hung along with his brother.
>
> Now if I was an innocent participator in Delamottes treasons and the Westons forgeries and robberies what pretty scrapes I must have been in!
>
> I married the young woman whom the brutal Lütterloh would have had for himself; and lived happy ever after (Thackeray 1994:1110-11).

As can be seen from this, the plot at this time is very much tied up with the factual historical characters whose story, as Thackeray rightly notes, can be found in the *Annual Register of 1781* (*Annual Register* 1781:184-6; 239-44). The first three paragraphs sketch the fictional context in which the story of these historical characters will play out. This context changed a little between the writing of the letter and the writing of the story, by which time the proposed father had become a grandfather and the intended profession of grocer that of perruquier; but the indications in the text still tie in with the historical truth of de la Motte and Lütterloh's stories, as well as that of the Westons, as sketched out above: the historical de la Motte really was executed as a traitor, betrayed by Lütterloh, and the Weston brothers were hanged. Much of the rest of Thackeray's sketch is given as hypothetical: "perhaps I went to Paris", "what if he wanted to marry that charming girl", "what, if this Scoundrel … happened to"[48], "[n]ow if I was[49] an innocent participator — what pretty scrapes I must have been in". All the hypotheticals, the conditional clauses, are related to the story of the other, fictional, characters (Denis Duval himself, the "charming girl") while never touching the story of M. de la Motte, whose destiny is recounted as "a fact". This is important in that it illustrates how fiction is mutable, and subject to the author's creative liberty in a way the factual history is not.

Crucially, the hermeneutic code of *Denis Duval* is structured around de la Motte's destiny. The reader is given dark hints in the "unpleasant sensation as of terror and approaching evil" when Duval first meets the Count, as well as the description of

[48]This quote would seem to break the pattern in that the conditional is tied to a historical figure, Lütterloh. This may be explained, however, by the fact that the sentence is describing the fictional demise of Lütterloh. It therefore, in fact, confirms the pattern. This indicates that historical figures are not immune to fictionalisation, but that fictionalisation must not contradict known fact in a historical realist novel.

[49]Granted, this word is not signalling the conditional clause, but the rest of the sentence is.

de la Motte's face as "ill-omened" (Thackeray 1864a:267). Even more unequivocally, already in the first instalment of the novel in *Cornhill*, the narrator writes that,

> As I survey it now, the curtain is down, and the play long over ; as I think of its surprises, disguises, mysteries, escapes, and dangers, I am amazed myself, and sometimes inclined to be almost as great a fatalist as M. de la Motte, who vowed that a superior Power ruled our actions for us, and declared that he could no more prevent his destiny from accomplishing itself, than he could prevent his hair from growing. What a destiny it was! What a fatal tragedy was now about to begin! (Thackeray 1864a:279).

Here, as in the earlier examples, the importance and grandure of the coming events, emphasised by exclamation marks, is presented; but the nature of these events is kept hidden. All the reader is given are coy hints of a "fatal tragedy". The result is that the enigma is preserved while its presence is still indicated.

Later on the text provides an indication that Duval, the narrator, was (and by inference the reader will be) there to see de la Motte's execution: "I little thought then that I was to see him on a day when his courage and his faith were both to have an awful trial" (Thackeray 1864a:290). He is "predestined to evil, to crime, to gloom" (Thackeray 1864b:386); "a bad man . . . ; and yet not utterly wicked : a great criminal who paid an awful penalty" (Thackeray 1864b:389); "a gentleman with many a stain, nay crime, to reproach him" (Thackeray 1864b:391). These passages all provide clues and partial answers to what can, with Greenwood's notes in view, be identified as the enigma of the text: they point towards the execution of de la Motte as a traitor. It is significant that the enigma of this text corresponds to the parts of the text that are based in historical fact, and that these passages are all in accordance with the verifiable, historical fate of de la Motte, suggesting that Thackeray did not alter the known circumstances: this in turn supports the authority of Greenwood's plot outline.

The fragment also presents the historical character Lütterloh, who is

introduced in the second instalment of the story (Thackeray 1864b:405). His importance does not become clear, however, until the fourth and last instalment, the final chapter written by Thackeray: here, his story is sketched out for the reader, followed by an assurance that "I shall have presently to tell how bitterly Monsieur de la Motte had afterwards to rue his acquaintance with this German", and that the reader may "suppose him engaged in practices yet more lawless and dangerous than smuggling" (Thackeray 1864c:644), namely treason. This is confirmed when Duval discovers a piece of paper (incidentally left blank by Thackeray) detailing troop movements (Thackeray 1864c:645), after which the narrator reveals that "the worthy gentleman [Lütterloh] was, in fact, a spy by trade" (Thackeray 1864c:646). The minor enigma of Lütterloh's character is quickly resolved, but itself functions as a partial answer to the larger enigma of de la Motte. The resolution of such minor enigmas has the effect, as I discussed in my first chapter, of reinforcing the anticipation of *anagnorisis*. Finally, the historical Westons are also part of a sub-enigma of the text, and this, too, is revealed within the text as it stands: the reader is quickly given to understand that Joseph Weston is a highwayman aided by his brother (Thackeray 1864b:404-5; Thackeray 1864d:518). It should be clear, then, how the historical account sketched by Thackeray pervades and provides the centre of the plot, already discernible in what had been written when Thackeray died. The only major identified hermeneutic structure of the text is centred on these historical events, and minor enigmas are already resolved and shown to be based in historical fact.

The reliance on the historical account as an authority that can reveal the "truth" of Thackeray's enigma is dependent, however, on the ability to tie the author

to this secondary authority. Greenwood sees the use of historical events as part of an attempt "to make the story *true*" (Greenwood 1864:656), and in his interpretation of Thackeray's memoranda, he emphasises the historical facts that relate to the story. Dudley Flamm notes, in his discussion of Thackeray as a realist, that "implicit in these formulations was the notion that the literary work reproduced reality almost to the point of doing away with the author's capacity for selection" (Flamm 1966:28). He continues, "[t]he emhasis that was placed on factual truth (rather than on artistic truth) suggests that the final standards of criticism tended to be ones external to the fictional work" (Flamm 1966:33). This suggests, as does Greenwood's discussion of the planned plot of *Duval*, that the historical truth which forms the core of the novel is perceived as tying the plot and depriving the author of his agency as entirely free: he cannot, following the genre of historical fiction, deviate substantially from the known historical fact, and his plans for the novel in that respect can be posited authoritatively. The understanding of the text as belonging to the genre "historical fiction", then, ties the author and the speculating reader, both. The main enigma of the narrative, found in the allusions to de la Motte's dark fate, thereby becomes available to factual verification, and once this has been shown there is little incentive to question it.

Duval is not merely a faithful recounting of the lives of the factual historical characters de la Motte, Lütterloh and the Westons, however; on the contrary, the main (and eponymous) character is the fictional Denis Duval, who is also the narrator. The fiction opens the narrative to possibilities outside of what can be stated as fact or tied by the authority of history, and this aspect of the text might have resulted in additional speculation as to the intended course of the narrative, had it had a different structure;

but the non-historical narrative of *Duval* does not encourage a desire for *anagnorisis* or suspense in relation to the destiny of the characters: the narrator is throughout at pains to reassure the reader that the text will have a happy ending. Already in the very first sentence of the narrative it is made clear that the narrator at the time of narration is married and enough at ease to make jokes at his family's expense; the narrative structure therefore appears unlikely to be tragic. And before the first chapter is completed, the reader is given the identity of the love of his life: "And who, pray, was Agnes? To-day her name is Agnes Duval, and she sits at her work-table hard by. The lot of my life has been changed by knowing her" (Thackeray 1864a:261). Agnes, of course, is the "charming girl" of the sketch.

The "now" of Duval's narration is peaceful and happy to a fault: "[Agnes] is sitting before me now — with spectacles on nose too — very placidly spelling the Portsmouth paper, where I hope she will soon read the promotion of . . . her son. . . . I turn towards her, and see her moored in our harbour of rest, after our life's chequered voyage, calm and happy. . . " (Thackeray 1864a:271); "I write these very words by my study fire in Fareport with madam opposite dozing over her novel till the neighbours shall come in to tea and their rubber" (Thackeray 1864b:407). Even a sinister development, which might have caused uncertainty or suspense, is given in the following way: "this dearest and happiest season of my life (for so I think it, though I am at this moment happy, most happy, and thankful) was to come to an abrupt ending" (Thackeray 1864c:648). The potential uncertainty created by the abrupt end to a happy period is here undermined by the assurance that the trials will be temporary and the separation will end in another happy period. Thackeray does not

even wait for the sentence announcing the end of happiness to be over before inserting this assurance. This emphasis on happy family life in which love is satisfied, children are prospering and they are integrated into society is especially significant because the main suspense of the plot, outside of the enigma of de la Motte, as described in the letter to Smith quoted earlier, lies in the obstacles of the love plot: Greenwood speculates, based on the sketch given in the letter to Smith, that Lütterloh was to convince the Westons to make Agnes marry him (Greenwood 1864:660). The narrative does not allow any apprehension or uncertainty on that score. The question "how will it end?" is answered already at the very beginning, and then reiterated throughout, apparently painstakingly puncturing any suspense that might form. This runs counter to the creation of suspense or uncertainty.

Henry James comments, in an article on *Duval* almost half a century later, "[w]e see him in a placid port after many voyages, and have that amount of evidence — the most, after all, that the most artless reader needs — as to the 'happy' side of the business. The evidence indeed is, for curiosity, almost excessive, or at least premature" (James 1901:45). In neither the historical account, nor the love story, is there much room for the imagination of the deprived reader to speculate. Thackeray lets the narrator comment on his narrative technique, writing,

> Why do I make zigzag journeys? As I sink back in my arm-chair, safe and sheltered *post tot discrimina*, and happier than it has been the lot of most fellow-sinners to be, the past comes back to me — the stormy past, the strange unhappy yet happy past — and I look at it scared and astonished sometimes; as huntsmen look at the gaps and ditches over which they have leapt, and wonder how they are alive (Thackeray 1864b:391).

The reader is given, once again, the promise of a happy ending, but also adventures to be had before that will be possible. And herein lies the third structure of Thackeray's

plotting: the structure of the non-historical narrative of Thackeray's novel relies not on the suspense directed towards the ending, but the resolution of an episodic sequence of adventures. The narrator alludes to "strange events" and "passionate griefs" (Thackeray 1864a:289).[50] It says little of what is to be the nature of these events, however.[51] What remains open to speculation, after the enigma has been resolved by reference to history and the love plot in the narrator's own assurances, are the individual episodes of Duval's life. But as James, in his essay on the book, notes,

> it carries us no farther, surely, to say … that the author's subject was to have been neither more nor less than the adventures of his hero … It is an affront to the memory of a great writer to pretend that they were to have been arbitrary and unselected.… The book was, obviously, to have been, as boys say, 'about' them. But what were *they* to have been about? Thackeray carried the mystery to his grave (James 1901:48).

A sequence of adventures does not require an internal coherence in the way a narrative structured by the hermeneutic code does, and therefore the progress of this sequence becomes impossible to predict; more importantly, it does not provide the *illusion* of predictability. While it does, ideally, derive from a plan, the illusion is that it flows randomly, and there is therefore little incentive for speculation. At the end of the fragment Duval is on his way to the first of these adventures as a midshipman under Captain Richard Pearson onboard the "Serapis", beginning a battle with the rebel Scot John Paul Jones, which the "Serapis", according to history, is going to lose. Again, Thackeray is using, and drawing attention to, the historically verifiable, as he notes: "the glorious misfortune which befel [sic] us is written in the annals of our

[50]The same tendency can be found elsewhere: "strange chances, dangers, adventures I was to undergo ere I again should press that dearest hand" (Thackeray 1864c:648).

[51]The reader is told that Duval will play some part in the dissolution of the smuggling community, and that his grandfather is to suffer some sort of punishment (Thackeray 1864d:526; Thackeray 1864c:645). There is every indication that the main parts of the narrative would consist of adventures and possibly a rise in position (to allow him to rise from midshipman to the person who would escort the King back to France (Thackeray 1864d:517)).

country" (Thackeray 1864c:654). But while it is possible to rely on historical fact to suggest that Duval's ship will lose the battle, it gives no indications of which new adventure will follow that one.

Duval, then, has a confluence of traits that would seem to discourage a phenomenon similar to Droodiana: there is the historical narrative, which, as Flamm notes, does away with the author's broader capacity for selection, and therefore also the freedom to choose diverging paths in the revelation of the enigma; once the historical facts are available, the desire for *anagnorisis* is satisfied. Moreover, the love story is resolved already in the first sentence, or at least (for the less attentive reader) in the first chapter, and therefore creates little desire for the end as resolution (this is also true for the life of Duval, as he continually provides reassurance in his narrative); and finally the adventure structure, which, as James points out, cannot be deduced, and which provides no illusion as to its deducibility. Once Greenwood's notes had been provided, with the final instalment, there can therefore be little incentive for further discussion of Thackeray's intentions for the development of the narrative.

This analysis of Thackeray's final work suggests that the desire for the end and *anagnorisis* is based in a deference to the intended authorial plot. In the case of *Denis Duval* a plausible hermeneutic structure is tied to the secondary authority of historical fact, thereby making the truth of the enigma verifiable. A text perceived to be dominated by the proairetic code does not offer the illusion that a truth is available, and will therefore not encourage speculation. In order to clarify the effect of perceived authorial authority on the reception of an unfinished narrative, I will look at two unfinished works from the end of the Victorian period: Robert Louis Stevenson's

St. Ives and *Weir of Hermiston*.

3.3 Stevenson – *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston*

This analysis of two of Stevenson's unfinished works will begin by discussing how the choice to provide an authorised completion of *St. Ives* may have been influenced by the episodic structure of this narrative, coupled with Isobel (Belle) Strong's ability, as Stevenson's stepdaughter and his amanuensis, to provide an authoritative outline of the planned plot. I will then show how this is supported by the fact that the new completion published in 1990 is based in the argument that Quiller-Couch and Strong misinterpreted Stevenson's aims due to their lack of factual historical knowledge, which it has since come to light that Stevenson had. I will then go on to discuss possible reasons why, unlike *St. Ives*, *Weir of Hermiston* was not finished. This discussion will also investigate the controversy regarding the intended ending of that plot, and will propose possible reasons for the existence of diverging opinions. This section of the chapter, then, will show not only that historical fact (and the demonstrability of an authors' knowledge of said facts) can restrict the plot, but also that perceived genre dictates our expectations of the text. This will in turn become relevant in my subsequent discussion of what makes *Edwin Drood* such a special case.

Stevenson's position as one of the foremost writers of late Victorian Britain is attested by Saintsbury's inclusion of him in his *Nineteenth Century Literature* (1896), published a year after Stevenson's death. The *Publishers' Circular*, despite misgivings as to his literary worth, states that "[b]eyond any other author of the day, he was a favourite with both the critics and the public" (Publishers' Circular

1894:717). Another testament to his popularity as an author can be found in the fact that Fisher Unwin's new magazine, *Cosmopolis*, started publication, in the very first number (on the very first page), with Stevenson's unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*.

Sidney Colvin, Stevenson's close friend and the editor of the Edinburgh edition of Stevenson's work (1894-8), writes of Stevenson's working habits that "it was always his habit to keep several books in progress at the same time, turning from one to another as the fancy took him, and finding relief in the change of labour" (Colvin 1896b:331). As a result, Stevenson had several unfinished texts on hand when he died from a stroke in his home on Samoa in December 1894: there was *Heathercat*, a text which focused on the Covenanters and a Scottish colony in America; *The Young Chevalier*, based on an idea of Andrew Lang's regarding Prince (later King) Charles' secret travels[52]; and *The Great North Road*, a highway-story which Stevenson described as in the process of turning into his "most ambitious design" (Stevenson 1995c:17). All of them had been put aside at the time of Stevenson's death, and would never be finished. While there is not room in this sub-chapter to discuss these texts, there are two others that stand out as particularly fruitful for investigation in the context of this thesis and the questions it aims to explore: *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston*, two very different fragments, both published in serial form after Stevenson's death, but treated very differently by readers and critics, as well as their publishers.

St. Ives is primarily interesting because, as a novel finished by another hand (that of Arthur T. Quiller-Couch), it opens up questions regarding the authority to

[52]For further information on the attribution of the idea to Lang, see Lang and Stevenson 1990:126-7, 129 and Stevenson 1995d:220; 251; 285.

finish a fragment; and no study of Stevenson's unfinished work could be conducted satisfactorily without an account of *Weir*, frequently declared the author's masterpiece.[53] *Weir* was also the text that Stevenson was writing the day he died, which puts it in the same category as *Duval* and *Edwin Drood* as an author's "last words". This particular fragment is also interesting in that it has caused some degree of contradictory speculation regarding its ending, albeit mainly confined to introductions to the various editions of the book. I will look at possible causes for this disagreement in an analysis of contradictory genres in the fragment and plot outline. There are two central questions to this section of the chapter: the question of why *St. Ives* could be, and was, finished by another, and *Weir* not; and the corollary question, which goes to the heart of this thesis: why has this completion not prompted a reaction and created a phenomenon like Droodiana? Why is Quiller-Couch's completion accepted as authoritative where similar completions of *Edwin Drood* provoked others to write alternative endings; and why do readers accept Strong's accounts of the plot where Forster's was rejected?

St. Ives was begun while Stevenson was ill, and parts of it were dictated by sign language to his amanuensis, Strong, as its author was forbidden from talking for medical reasons. When he laid this text aside to take up *Weir of Hermiston* again, shortly before his death in 1894, it might have remained unfinished even if its author had lived: Stevenson showed very little enthusiasm for the fragment in his letters. In one of these letters, from July that year, he writes to Colvin that *St. Ives* "is a mere tissue of adventures; the central figure not very well or very sharply drawn; no

[53]Including by Stevenson himself: "Mind you, I expect *The Justice Clerk* to be my masterpiece. My Braxfield is already a thing of beauty and a joy forever, and, so far as he has gone, *far* my best character" (Stevenson 1956:314). *The Justice Clerk* is an early title for *Weir*.

philosophy, no destiny, to it; some of the happenings very good in themselves, I believe, but none of them *bildende*, none of them constructive, except in so far as they make up a kind of sham picture of the time" (Stevenson 1995b:310). It is doubtful he would find many to disagree with this assessment: there is a long tradition of deprecating *St. Ives* by setting it up against the example of *Weir of Hermiston*.[54] *St. Ives* is episodic and adventure oriented, and the plot quite straightforward: the hero must escape Edinburgh and go south, only to return, eluding an evil cousin, to win the woman he loves. This circular journey is in fact completed twice, and the main body of the story consists of adventures along the way, encounters and heroic deeds. The episodic adventure structure of the narrative, and the lack of a prominent enigma, places it in the picaresque tradition, and the low critical valuation of *St. Ives* can in part be traced to these genre aspects.

St. Ives was published serially from November 1896 to November 1897 in *Pall Mall Magazine*, and as Colvin states in the preface to the one-volume edition of the novel "[f]or the benefit of those readers who do not like a story to be left unfinished, the delicate task of supplying the missing chapters has been entrusted to Mr. Quiller-Couch, whose work begins at Chap. XXXI" (Colvin 1897:i). There is a suggestion in Colvin's note that not liking a story to be left unfinished is not universal; and seen in light of Prideaux's comment quoted in the footnote above, it

[54]For example, Chesterton writes that "When Stevenson drew the long bow for the last time, like Robin Hood, he had two strings to his bow ; and they both broke ; but one was much stronger than the other. In other words he had two stories in his head, both of which broke off short ; and perhaps it is not surprising that the weaker was rather neglected in favour of the stronger. The story of *St. Ives* contains excellent things, as does everything that he ever wrote … . But it may be called disappointing, with rather more exactitude than is usual in the use of that word" (Chesterton 1928:176). And similarly William Francis Prideaux, "In *Weir of Hermiston* Mr. Stevenson was culminating, and the thread broke in his hand. To lovers of literature, the fragment will probably be his most interesting piece; but the public, anxious to know 'what became of them all' will be constant to *Treasure Island* (Prideaux 1903:92-3).

could be read as carrying the value judgement that this type of reading is an inferior practice. This might begin to explain, along with the comparative finishedness of the two, why *St. Ives* was finished by another hand when *Weir* was not: the latter is considered more literary, and focuses more on characters, descriptions and language, than the former's mere adventure sequences.[55]

In *St. Ives*, as in *Duval*, the reader is given indications that the narrative will arrive at a happy ending already on the first page: "Little did I suppose that this ramrod body and frozen face would, in the end, step in between me and all my dearest wishes; that upon this precise, regular icy soldierman my fortunes should so nearly shipwreck!" (Stevenson 1896:313). As in *Duval*, there is the reassuring first person narrator; but while the indication that his fortunes will not "shipwreck" is registered in the "nearly", it is never dwelt on in the same way that Thackeray's narrator does in *Duval*. The need for a (happy) resolution may therefore be rather greater in this text; more important, I think, is the fact that it lacks a strong hermeneutic code. This means that it relies for suspense entirely on the sequence of episodes of adventure along the way towards an end where the obstacles of St. Ives' situation have been overcome. The main incentive for providing a written out end to the narrative is therefore closely related to the episodic nature of the narrative. Listing the episodes of the narrative would not provide the suspense and release that this narrative depends on; and the plot as a whole lacks the peripeteic twist that makes possible the satisfaction of *anagnorisis*, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Because the narrative depends

[55] *St. Ives* was also much nearer completion than *Weir*, with only a few chapters left unfinished. There is also the possibility that *St. Ives*' not being the work Stevenson was writing when he died may have contributed to the possibility of its being legitimately finished by another. It is not, to the same extent, touched by the death of the author as his last words. In addition, the serial rights had already been sold, and James Pope Henessy attributes the completion by Quiller-Couch to this fact (Cf. Henessy 1974:260-1).

on the complication and resolution of each episode, rather than a plot with *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, the summary will not serve the purpose of providing satisfaction, and *St. Ives* would benefit from a writing out of the end.

The question that must be asked is why, given all the attempted completions of *Edwin Drood*, Quiller-Couch's end to *St. Ives* has apparently been considered as so authoritative by readers and critics as to preclude a similar phenomenon. There are a few factors which may have contributed. It was delivered almost seamlessly as a continuation in the serial publication, and has been published together with Stevenson's text in nearly all editions.[56] Only in the 1990s, nearly a century after the original publication, was an alternative version published. This conclusion, written by Jenni Calder, was based on research by Robert J. Storey. The introduction to this new version is primarily concerned with justifying the writing of a new ending, and this justification is based on a combination of authorial intention and historical fact: it presents evidence that Stevenson had intended to make use of the factual story of "The True Blooded Yankee", an American privateer ship operating in British waters, in order to get St. Ives from the end of the balloon journey, to France. Storey also argues that Quiller-Couch mismanaged the episode because he did not know that American privateers operated in British waters at that time (quoting Quiller-Couch's letters on the subject to Colvin), and so had to find a way around that (resulting in a rather elaborate episode including a trip to America). Moreover, Storey claims that "The True Blooded Yankee" became "The Privateer" in the mediation of sign language during Stevenson's convalescence, and suggests that Strong's limited

[56]The end of the August instalment has a note appended, which states that Quiller-Couch will provide the last six chapters.

knowledge may have misled Quiller-Couch at the critical time (Storey 1990:vii). Storey then shows how Quiller-Couch, in his letters to Colvin, agonised over the episode and lamented that he had discovered the information about privateers too late to change the plot (Storey 1990:vii).

Calder completely replaces Quiller-Couch's completion with her own, based on Storey's research: the first chapter is quite similar to Quiller-Couch's, but the two versions get progressively more different as the narrative progresses; where Quiller-Couch's conclusion ends with the lovers reunited, Calder's ends with St. Ives on his way to the cottage; and where Quiller-Couch gives us Alain (the evil cousin) tied hand and foot by law and evidence in the hands of St. Ives' allies, Calder's ends with Alain simply promising not to be bad anymore after having been defeated in single combat with St. Ives. Calder's alterations to the narrative, then, go beyond the plot directly affected by the error of "The Privateer". As was the case in relation to *Duval*, authorial authority is here tied to another, verifiable authority in historical fact, but not fact independently of the author. The argument hinges on Storey's ability to show that Stevenson knew of this historical fact and had intended to use it. This suggests, then, that the authority of the authorised completion only holds while it is in accordance with what can be seen as the creative intention of the author. As soon as Quiller-Couch's completion came under question, it retained no authority on its own.

The reason why we have not seen a Droodian-style reaction to this completion would appear to be that while Quiller-Couch's completion may not hold authority itself, Strong's outline remains authoritative in general, if somewhat unclear on particulars: Strong's veracity as a source is not put in question by Storey's

introduction; the argument is directed only against a particular interpretation and execution of that outline. In addition, the structure of the text discourages speculation: there was never much doubt where the story was heading, so the question of suspense or a surprising twist is to be found not in the main narrative through disconfirmation followed by consonance, but within the individual episodes of the adventures of the hero. As such, the "twists" are both inaccessible to the reader's speculation and available in the correct decoding of Strong's instructions. Or, more importantly, they appear to be.

The example of *St. Ives*, then, would seem to be quite similar to Thackeray's *Denis Duval*, in the episodic emphasis of the narrative and in the later appeal to historical fact as a way to fix the authorially intended plot. It is different from *Duval*, however, in the lack of any strong enigma in the text, as well as in a larger reliance on the love plot in the creation of suspense. The discussion of why *St. Ives* was completed, however, is perhaps best concluded in connection with a Stevenson text which was treated very differently.

Weir of Hermiston began publication in the first instalment of *Cosmopolis*, an international, multilingual literary magazine, in 1896.[57] It opens with a note from Colvin, stating that "the following unfinished romance is the last work of the late Robert Louis Stevenson. . . . [T]he chapters which he lived long enough to write, and which will be printed in this and succeeding numbers of COSMOPOLIS, constitute, it may be surmised, little more than a third part of the intended book" (Colvin 1896a:1).

[57]One may wonder at the choice to begin a new journal (on the very first page) with a novel that is known to have been left unfinished. It may have been a nod to the perception of a high literary taste of the readers, who would be expected not to read the stories for plot. More likely, however, it is a testament to the fame of Stevenson: even an unfinished novel by such a big name, especially so shortly after his death, will have attracted subscribers to a new magazine.

A reader would therefore from the beginning be aware that they were reading a text which lacked its intended end. The final instalment of the story, in April, contains an editor's note, promising that "[i]n the May number of COSMOPOLIS a critical study of 'Weir of Hermiston,' by Professor Sidney Colvin, will give *inter alia*, an authentic account of the intended course and issue of the story from the point where it was broken off by the author's death" (*Cosmopolis* 1896a:27). Colvin's "authentic account", the description of which gives some account of the authority it was seen as holding, duly followed and was also reprinted in Colvin's subsequent editions of the novel, as well as several others. It is based on the testimony of Strong, who had taken down the story thus far from dictation. The continuation of the story as sketched by Strong, according to Colvin, is as follows: Archie's attempts to distance himself from Christina will drive her into the arms of Frank Innes; when Archie finds out that she has been seduced (from the elder Kirstie, who suspects Archie), he has an "interview" with the man, leading to Frank's death at Archie's hands by the Weaver's Stone; Lord Hermiston will then do his duty and sentence his son to be hanged, and himself die from the strain of it; but the Four Brothers, originally out to revenge their sister's honour on Archie, find that he has done what they had intended, and end up breaking him out of prison. There is a happy ending as Archie and Christina escape to America (Colvin 1896b:323-4). Colvin's account of Strong's plot outline has not, however, been appended to the end of the fragment as consistently as Greenwood's notes on *Duval*.[58] In fact, several newer editions eschew Colvin's notes and instead provide their own. These still tend to rely heavily on Strong's account as reported by Colvin,

[58]It should be noted that *Weir* has been reprinted more often than *Duval*, and so the two are not entirely comparable.

but do not necessarily follow Colvin's conclusions. This is worth looking into in this context because it is the closest approach to something like Droodian speculation in the books I am looking at here.

First, in the context of my discussion in my first chapter of Kermode and Brooks' comments on the necessity of the twisted path of *peripeteia*, followed by an experience of disconfirmation and consonance, Strong's plot sketch can be seen to be highly *satisfying* in that it provides the consonance Kermode describes: the father condemning the son to death is a plotted event of tragedy, not an apparently random sequence in the vein of the adventures of *Duval* or *St. Ives*. In the specific context of *Weir*, the consonance of the narrative lies in the early establishment of Hermiston as a "hanging judge" who takes pride in this part of his profession. This, while being the main cause of Archie's seclusion in the country, and in turn of his meeting with Christina, is allowed to recede into the background as the main focus of the narrative becomes Archie and his surroundings away from Edinburgh. Its introduction into the twist of the narrative would therefore provide the consonance Kermode describes.[59] However, there is a second such twist in *Weir* (according to Strong), in that the four brothers manage to countermand this tragic story and provide a happy ending. This, too, is an ending which would provide consonance: they have already been established as characters who will go to extraordinary lengths for their family and take pride in extralegal adventures when they feel they have right on their side. But what might appear as a simple sketch of character or local colour attains potentially important plot functions as they resolve the problem of Archie being condemned to

[59]It is worth noting that this consonance is much closer to Aristotle's description of tragedy than the more extended use of the word as I applied it in my first chapter.

death. There are therefore two plausible plots which both provide an experience of disconfirmation followed by consonance in the end.

This coexistence of two competing plots, one of which could be seen as providing a "false" happy ending, is not particular to Stevenson. I would argue that Charles Dickens does the same in *Oliver Twist*; and Stevenson himself commented on the technique in a letter to J. M. Barrie, stating that "*The Little Minstrel* ought to have ended badly; we all know it did; and we are infinitely grateful to you for the grace and good feeling with which you lied about it. If you had told the truth, I for one could never have forgiven you" (Stevenson 1995a). Stevenson's Four Brothers provide the possibility of that particular twist: the reader is allowed a happy ending, a disconfirmation of the tragedy, followed by the consonance of plot, as the Four Brothers seem to have found their *raison d'être*.

The fragment itself is full of a sense of tragedy: the narrator's sigh that had Archie "but talked … there might have been no tale to write upon the Weirs of Hermiston" (Stevenson 1995e:22); the references to Christina as "fey"[60] (Stevenson 1995e:76-77); or as "one who had just contracted, or was just contracting, a mortal sickness of the mind which should yet carry her towards death and despair" (Stevenson 1995e:78); and Kirstie's being "wae to see ye there – in pairt for the omen, for I think there's a weird on the place" (Stevenson 1995e:109). Sutherland claims that "[i]t would seem, from this, that Stevenson began with a tragic design (Archie condemned to be hanged by his father) and then veered round to a more romantic conception (Archie rescued from the gallows to escape abroad with

[60]A Scots word describing someone acting strange, "as persons are observed to be in the hour of approaching death or disaster" (*Weir, Glossary*).

Christina)" (Sutherland 1992:xix). Sutherland appears to place unnecessary emphasis on the claim by S. R. Lysaght, that the "climax" of *Weir* was to be a death-cell scene in which Christina was to inform Archie that she was pregnant by Frank, from which Sutherland surmises that "the hero was, apparently to go to his doom with his cup of sorrows filled to brimming" (Sutherland 1992:xix). Lysaght's memories, however, as he sets them down, are of Stevenson calling the scene "[t]he strongest scene in the book", not its "climax" (Lysaght 1919:713-14). That is Lysaght's word, and there is really no indication that the scene was necessarily meant as an ending; Sutherland seems to want to keep the tragic ending in play.

It would seem that there are two elements to the story: that of the tragedy, which is coherent but would end with Archie hanged, and that of the legend or romance, which provides the happy ending. This means, however, that the end would seem to contradict the story: the happy ending would not be "real", but a ploy to be seen through by the reader, as was the case in Barrie's story; the plotted tragedy is more coherent if Archie dies.[61] The fragment of *Weir*, then, has a double problem of ends: in addition to the lack of an ending, the planned ending might itself be "false" – a happy ending to be accepted or rejected by the reader, with the tragedy haunting it. Herein, I would argue, lies the main cause for the critical disagreement over the ending, which has fuelled the speculation about what ending was intended by Stevenson. The key to this disagreement is a difference in opinion about the predominant genre of the book.

Strong's account of the plot has again not remained uncontested. As in *St.*

[61]This may be why the television adaptation decides to have Christina go mad and Archie be sentenced (Stevenson and Wright 1973).

Ives, where Storey found that historical accounts would be better able to illuminate the plot than Strong, *Weir of Hermiston* has its own conflict between Strong and an alternative authority fused with that of the author: her account of Lord Hermiston sentencing his son to death has not been left standing because it is in conflict with historical judicial fact: it is an appealing tragic idea, but wholly untenable in a historic novel set in the Scotland of the early nineteenth century. More importantly, it has been demonstrated time and again that Stevenson was aware of this legal fact.[62] Like historical events in *Duval*, judicial fact is perceived as constraining the freedom of the author and the speculation of the reader alike. While these two trains of disagreement with regard to the ending have caused some writing on the subject, however, it seems to have been mainly confined to introductions to the various editions of the novel. Little or nothing has spilled over into broader public speculation. The question of what makes *Edwin Drood* different must therefore be asked.

3.4 What makes *Edwin Drood* different?

While both Thackeray and Stevenson had a wide readership, Dickens far outstripped both of them in terms of circulation and popular appeal. In the five years between the publication of *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) and the beginning of *Edwin Drood*, Dickens had not published any new novels, but his presence in the public mind was ensured through a series of reading tours throughout the United States and the United

[62]For example in Stevenson's letter to Charles Baxter from December 1st 1892: "The Justice Clerk tries some people capitally on circuit. Certain evidence cropping up, the charge is transferred to the J.C.'s son. Of course in the next trial the J.C. is excluded and the case is called before the Lord Justice-General" (Stevenson 1956:315). It seems, then, that Hermiston was to have presided at the trial of Frank's murder, where someone other than Archie was to have been accused. When it becomes clear that Archie is guilty (whether because he confesses or because the evidence points in his direction), his father would have transferred the charge rather than sentence another man in his son's place. This would have been tantamount to sentencing his son to death and explains Strong's sketch.

Kingdom. Expectations for his new novel, after the longest literary hiatus since he started publication of *Pickwick* can be found reflected in the sales figures. When the news of Dickens' demise was made known, the first three instalments of *Edwin Drood* had already reached unprecedented sales: according to Frederick G. Kitton, 50,000 copies of the first instalment had been sold while Dickens was still alive (Kitton 1897:225).[63] The remaining three instalments were published according to schedule. *Edwin Drood* differs from the unfinished novels of Stevenson and Thackeray, then, first in its early publication history: a great number of early readers would have come to Dickens' story expecting it to be completed, and Dickens' death would have led to an unexpected interruption. In the cases of both Stevenson and Thackeray, their unfinished status was made clear from the beginning: they were published entirely posthumously, and all three were prefigured by notes explaining this status. While this fact alone is unlikely to have caused the extraordinary reception, there is a possibility that early readers' particular expectations about the narrative may have been a contributing factor to the development of Droodiana. The main body of Droodian speculation is written much later, but the "Golden Decade"[64] does not spring into existence spontaneously, and it has its roots in the first years after Dickens' demise, as I will show in my next chapter.

Moreover, where the other texts discussed in this chapter were published together with notes purporting to provide an authoritative outline of the respective

[63]These figures come from Forster (Forster 1874:424), but as as Patten notes, Forster never indicates whether it refers to numbers of the first instalment, the third, or the collected number of instalments sold of the book at that point. We do, however, know that the first had sold out within the period of a week (Patten 1978:322). It therefore seems a reasonable assumption that these figures refer to the number of first instalments, as Kitton does.

[64]This is Cox' term for the period 1905 to 1914, in which twenty five percent of the Droodian texts he covers were written (Cox 1998:xv).

authors' plans for their novels, no such immediate resolution was attempted in the case of *Edwin Drood*. With the final serial instalment the publishers, Chapman and Hall, printed the following notice:

> All that was left in manuscript of EDWIN DROOD is contained in the Number now published – the sixth. Its last entire passage had not been written two hours when the event occurred which one very touching passage in it (grave and sad, but also cheerful and assuring) might seem almost to have anticipated. The only notes in reference to the story that have since been found concern that portion of it exclusively which is treated in earlier Numbers. Beyond the clues therein afforded to its conduct or catastrophe, nothing whatever remains; and it is believed that what the author himself would have desired is done, in placing before the reader without further note or suggestion the fragment of THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD. 12th August, 1870. (Dickens 1870)

This notice already sets up the finality of the fragment: "All that was left" is now published, there is nothing more, as there would have been if "the event" of Dickens' sudden death had not occurred.[65] This not only emphasises that there was an authorial intention for more than what we are left with, but also underlines the absence of any authorial plans or sketches for the intended course of the narrative towards its end. Crucially, there is the emphasis on "clues" in the narrative itself as the only available source of information to its "conduct or catastrophe". The resolution of the mystery (suggested by the title), is thereby left in the hands of the reader "without further note or suggestion". This note from Chapman and Hall emphasises the openness of the narrative at hand, and the unresolved nature of the mystery, leaving its resolution in the hands of the reader with only the published text as guide. This is markedly

[65]It also contains the suggestion which later seems to have been absorbed by those prone to speculation (and which I will discuss further in my fourth chapter), that Dickens' death feels somehow to have been "anticipated" by his text. This is another example of how the reader orders things according to the end: because Dickens died these passages are emphasised. It is unlikely they would have been given the same prominence if he had put it aside and lived on to write many other novels. It is also interesting to note how the life of the author is here incorporated into the constructed narrative of *Edwin Drood*, the attempt to make sense of the fragment.

different from the other texts I have discussed in this chapter: Greenwood's notes stressed the irrecoverability of Thackeray's plan, outside of what could be established as historical fact; and Strong's accounts as mediated by Colvin promised access to the author's intended plot.

The lack of an authorial plan would seem to be a key to the difference in the reception of *Edwin Drood* compared to *Duval*, *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston*. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, one of the temptations of serial narrative is to write it without an end in sight, only composing one episode after another; there is no indication that such was the case with Dickens' later novels, however. Painstakingly plotted novels like *Bleak House* would seem to suggest that Dickens' method generally (certainly in the later novels) ensured that he had a very clear idea of where the novel was headed.[66]

There are number plans for most Dickens novels, starting with *Dombey and Son*. The plan for *Edwin Drood*, however, breaks off where the novel stops, and it provides no clear indication as to what would have happened in the continuation.[67] The lack of a material plan for *Edwin Drood* would seem to have left readers with no indication of what the intended end to the narrative would have been: they were, according to the Chapman and Hall notice, left with only the text as it stands, and its

[66]Another indication of his tendency to plan can be found in Dickens' reaction when it was suggested that he had collapsed the house in *Little Dorrit* in reference to recent events: Swinburne relates the story that when the collapse of Clennam House was supposed to be an *ad hoc* addition to the story in reference to a tragedy in London, Dickens replied with a sharp letter pointing out all the references to the house throughout the narrative, foreshadowing the scene of its collapse (Swinburne 1894:114).

[67]Harry Stone points out in his introduction to *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels* that the working notes show precisely Dickens' tendency to plan his novels, and he finds proof of this in the places where Dickens in his notes for the early part of a novel tells himself to foreshadow something to come at the end (Stone 1987:xxv). He emphasises Dickens' awareness of the parallels and correspondences of his plots (Stone 1987:xxvi). This is not to say that such plans were set in stone. Dickens famously changed the ending to his *Great Expectations*, for example, after a suggestion by Bulwer Lytton.

clues as to how it might have developed. However, while there are no number plans for the unwritten parts of *Edwin Drood*, it may be inaccurate to claim that there is no trace of an authorial plan for the plot as a whole. In the final volume of the biography on Charles Dickens written by his good friend John Forster, in 1874, the latter confirmed the absence of any number plans. He did, however, provide an account of the plot as he claimed Dickens had told it to him before it was written:

> 'I laid aside the fancy I told you of, and have a very curious and new idea for my new story. Not a communicable idea (or the interest of the book would be gone), but a very strong one, though difficult to work.' The story, I learnt immediately afterward, was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle; the originality of which was to consist in the review of the murderer's career by himself at the close, when its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted. The last chapters were to be written in the condemned cell, to which his wickedness, all elaborately elicited from him as if told of another, had brought him. Discovery by the murderer of the utter needlessness of the murder for its object, was to follow hard upon commission of the deed; but all discovery of the murderer was to be baffled till towards the close, when, by means of a gold ring which had resisted the corrosive effects of the lime into which he had thrown the body, not only the person murdered was to be identified but the locality of the crime and the man who committed it. So much was told to me before any of the book was written; and it will be recollected that the ring, taken by Drood to be given to his betrothed only if their engagement went on, was brought away with him from their last interview. Rosa was to marry Tartar, and Crisparkle the sister of Landless, who was himself, I think, to have perished in assisting Tartar finally to unmask and seize the murderer (Forster 1874:425-6).

Taken on face value, this passage would seem to indicate that Jasper killed Drood ("the murder of a nephew by his uncle") for the love of Rosa: "the utter needlessness of the murder for its object", the discovery of which "was to follow hard upon commission of the deed" would seem to fit well with the scene where Grewgious informs Jasper that the engagement between Rosa and Edwin had come to an end before the latter disappeared. A gold ring has also, with much emphasis, been

introduced into the narrative, and Drood is supposed to have had it with him when he disappeared. In addition, lime has been introduced in connection with Durdles. Forster's version does present new puzzles, however, in its assertion that "its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted", and that the confession was to be given "as if told of another"; nor is it obvious how the gold ring was to identify both "the locality of the crime" and "the man who committed it".[68]

The problem of *Edwin Drood*, then, is not necessarily so much the absence of an authorial plan, as the fact that the purported authorial plan was rejected by a number of readers. Based on how Greenwood and Strong's plot outlines have been received, it might have been expected that Forster's plot outline, as that of a close friend and the authorised biographer of the author, would also be generally accepted: one would at least expect Forster's plot to be taken as authoritative unless it were confronted by a conflicting authority. In this case, there are no historical or judicial facts that can supersede the summary. The reasons for the rejection of Forster must therefore be located elsewhere. I believe there is a combination of factors that explains the treatment of Forster's plot outline. The first of these is timing: Forster's account of the plot did not surface until four years after the author's death. This is a marked difference from the plot outlines suggested by Greenwood, and Strong and Colvin, which were all printed immediately following the unfinished narratives.

[68]Droodian suggestions range from a split personality to the use of drugs and/or hypnosis in the first; as well as more or less sensationalist ideas of Jasper returned to the place where Drood was buried to look for the ring and there either meeting the living Drood or someone impersonating him, or digging through the decomposed remains of his nephew (and/or being himself killed by the quicklime). Both Charles Forsyte and Edward Blishen suggest that if Dickens had lived to finish his novel, there would have been no point in Robert Louis Stevenson writing his *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) (Garfield and Dickens 1980:xv; Forsyte 1980:104).

During this period of four years early readers had had enough time to ponder *Edwin Drood*'s plot on their own.[69] They were even encouraged to do so by Chapman and Hall's assurance that the only "clues" to its "conduct or catastrophe" were to be found in the fragment as it stood.

The second factor is one of genre, as in *Weir*: encouraged by the title, and perhaps the note from the publishers, readers have to a large extent read *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as a mystery novel, and one that provides the attendant structure of that genre. As I stated in my first chapter, the hermeneutic code is used provisionally by the first-time reader, who structures and restructures the understanding of the enigma based on new developments in the text; and the reader does this with the expectation that the end will provide a final resolution, *anagnorisis*, in which the reader will be able to look back over the peripeteic twists of the narrative and experience the disconfirmation followed by consonance which Kermode describes. The problem with *Edwin Drood*, however, is that all readers find themselves in a state of a perpetual lack of that ending that would finally provide an authoritative organisation of the partial answer and snares of the hermeneutic code. Because the narrative was never completed, it is difficult to say what the finished structure would have been. This is evidenced by the various "schools" of Droodiana, which regard the novel variously as a "whodunnit" forerunner of Sherlock Holmes or a psychological thriller prefiguring Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. As in *Weir*, then, some of the controversy springs from a disagreement over what would have been the dominant

[69]They may also have been influenced by completions like Kerr's (or Henry Morford's *John Jasper's Secret* (1872), which was more of a true completion, written in an attempt at Dickens' style), both of which construct a plot very different from Forster's outline in that they have Edwin Drood survive. The first speculations that differ from Forster share this plot development (Morford 1872)).

genre of the text. Once Droodiana begins, it is fueled by the double crux of the unfinished narrative: the lack of an ending means we have no way of determining how the mystery would have been structured, or even whether there would have been one; and how we take it to be structured determines our interpretations of clues in the text.

The perception of the text as part of the genre of the mystery novel has functioned as an alternative (and sometimes overriding) authority. Readers who, after speculating on the possible development of a mystery novel, have arrived at what they consider a satisfactory *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, may be reluctant to set that aside in favour of a plot which does not fulfill these expectations. The second contributing factor in the rejection of Forster's plot proposal, then, becomes evident if considered in the light of Kermode and Brooks' emphasis on the unexpected route to the end, Kermode's *peripeteia* (Kermode 1967:18): Forster's account follows the expectations the reader might have formed of the plot from what they have read so far, but they do not want to be able to predict the end half-way through. Forster's plot outline lacks a twist to take the reader by surprise, and the "originality" of the plot would not fit Kermode's description of "a disconfirmation followed by a consonance" (Kermode 1967:18).[70] Genre expectations therefore become crucial in fostering Droodian speculations, much as they are at the heart of the controversy over *Weir*'s ending.

An important side to this is that the structure of the mystery novel provides the illusion of solvability. Particularly as the genre of the "whodunnit" is developed, the expectation that the solution to the mystery can be made apparent through the correct

[70]The perception of *Edwin Drood* as a mystery, or even a puzzle narrative is persistent, and not confined to those who reject Forster. His plot outline would be more in coherence with a psychological novel, and there are those who would argue for this view, but even those who subscribed to Forster's account appear to have felt the lack of *peripeteia* (consciously or subconsciously), which comes to expression in their attempts to introduce other twists in the plot. Notably, J. Cuming Walters' *Clues to Dickens's "Mystery of Edwin Drood"*.

decoding of Dickens' clues in the text as it stands, becomes a central assumption of Droodiana. This sets *Edwin Drood* apart from the episodic narratives of *Duval* and *St. Ives.* It is clear, from the reactions to various completions presented, that no single ending has proved satisfactory: Droodiana is a search for the *correct* end, and as such a search for the authority that will fix the end, and thereby the plot. In the other texts I have discussed in this chapter, there have been other authorities that have restricted that of the author, and confirmed or corrected the plot outlines provided. The history of Droodiana could be described as a history of a power vacuum, and of the conflict between the authorities that would attempt to fill it, each in its way being unable to do so entirely.

3.5 Conclusion

The unfinished novels of Dickens, Thackeray and Stevenson stand as individual works, each concerned with a different topic, written in an individual style. What they do have in common is their status as unfinished works by authors who in their own time were exceedingly popular, and who have retained their popularity since. While it shares these characteristics, Dickens' *Edwin Drood* presents a case apart in this company in more than one way. It was the only one to have started publication before the death of its author. The lack of a plan also sets *Edwin Drood* apart: the sketch provided by Forster was rejected by many readers, possibly because it arrived too late and did not provide enough clarity on the unexpected twist readers expected from the ending, due in part to the mystery suggested by the title. The association with the genre of the "whodunnit", moreover, not only creates an expectation of an unexpected

twist followed by a retrospective illumination of the hermeneutic code; but more importantly, unlike the other unfinished works, *Edwin Drood* provides the illusion that the enigma can be solved and the lacking ending can be restored. An adventure story with a picaresque strain, like *St. Ives*, does not encourage prediction of this kind. Neither do the adventure aspects of *Duval*, and the enigma of that work is restricted by historical fact, which, once it has been made apparent, will also discourage further speculation. *Weir*, different from all of the above, is perhaps closest to *Edwin Drood* in that without the possibility for an outside authority to confirm the proposed plot outline, readers have disagreed on the genre of the text and, as a corollary, proposed different endings.

Edwin Drood has engendered a number of completions and speculations, none of them officially sanctioned, nor accepted as authoritative, and they provide a variety of contradictory plot resolutions. Had the author finished his work, it is likely no one would have written alternative endings (and even less published them).[71] As it is, they are legion; and there is no authority to choose between them, to fix or close off a version of the narrative. *St. Ives*, on the contrary, does provide a completion by another hand than that of the author; one sanctioned by the joint authority of original publication, the publisher and the adherence to the plan of the author. It is only when the latter is shown to be misinterpreted that an alternative completion is published. It

[71] Such alternative endings have not been published for Dickens' finished novels. However, Thackeray wrote an open letter in *Fraser's Magazine*, purporting to ask Alexandre Dumas to write a new ending to *Ivanhoe* (Titmarsh 1846:238). This functions more like a criticism of Scott's choices than as a real proposal, however. He includes an outline for a more satisfactory conclusion, but there are no indications that anything ever came of it. The only Dickens novel which has been published with another ending is *Great Expectations*, but the justification for that was a perception that the originally published ending was the result of outside influence rather than Dickens' original intention. There is, unfortunately, no room to adequately discuss this subject here.

is, then, still grounded in the perceived decoding of the original intention of the author and in showing how the mediating link of Strong has malfunctioned.

We do, however, encounter another type of authority in the resolutions of the plots of *Duval* and *Weir*: that of history and law, respectively. In *Duval* the plot is tied to the historic event, and the genre of the realistic historic novel requires it to be followed. It thereby ties the creative freedom of the author, obliging him to follow the plot already laid out in history. Similarly, the impossibility of a judge in 19th century Scotland passing sentence on his own son must be respected. But this is not an authority separate from that of authorial intention; it only serves to ground it by limiting his freedom if invention, and makes it easier for the deprived reader to access this intention, because it has been fixed. It is always shown that the author was aware of the alternative or additional authority. All these very different serial narratives, then, have in common that the responses they have engendered serve to highlight again the question of the authority of the author's creative intention, which I raised at the end of my preceeding chapter. As I hope to show in what follows. Droodiana approaches this problem of the author's absence in a number of ways, but it always revolves around the question of which authority is best placed to provide the *correct* end to the fragment.

4 Droodian Completions

> Mr. Dickens has left three numbers complete, in addition to those already published, this being one-half of the story as it was intended to be written. These numbers will be published, and the fragment will so remain. No other writer could be permitted by us to complete the work which Mr. Dickens has left. (Chapman and Hall 1870:12)

When Charles Dickens died, leaving his final work only half-finished, his publishers declared that there would never be an authorised completion to the work, in part because there were no indications as to how the author would have completed it had he lived. This inability to furnish readers with an ending sanctioned by the authority of the author is the central problem of the volume of textual production referred to as "Droodiana": the author's death and subsequent inability to finish his narrative means that the very foundation for interpretation is incomplete; the lack of any authorial plan for the later chapters means that the confidence in the end, which as I have shown in my first chapter is part of our desire for *anagnorisis*, the consonance of the end, is disturbed. Droodian texts are written in a direct response to the creative void left by Dickens' death: they all attempt to fill that void, but they employ a very varied set of strategies in doing so. There are two main approaches to the problem of the missing ending: speculations and completions. Speculations take the form of non-fictional analysis of Dickens' text and make explicit their reasons for suggesting one plot outline over another; completions attempt to provide an ending written out in fictional form.[72] Completions have traditionally been reviled, and while speculations have

[72]In addition there exists a number of pastiches (many of which draw on the figure of Sherlock Holmes) which set out to discuss (and often solve) the mystery in fictional form, but at an ironic remove. Examples of these include *The Disappearance of Edwin Drood* by Peter Rowland and *The D. Case: The Truth About the Mystery of Edwin Drood* by Franco Lucentini and Carlo Fruttero. Lang's review of Henry Jackson's volume of speculation from 1911 was also delivered in pastiche form in The Cambridge Review in March 1911 as "About Edwin Drood. A Dialogue" (in which the Sherlock Holmes character is called "Sheroot").

been somewhat ridiculed by other Dickensians, they are still considered more legitimate than completions.[73] Leaving the study of speculations for the following chapter, I will here study the strategies which Droodian completions employ in order to legitimise their approaches. I will also consider the reactions to these completions, asking whether the strategies work. In so doing I will further explore the perceived importance of the author, or of authorities linked to the author, in creating the foundation for meaning in literature, and more specifically in *Edwin Drood*. First, however, the question of the nature and impact of authorial creative authority must be clarified.

Two weeks after Dickens' death, a note (quoted in the introduction to this chapter) was sent out by Chapman and Hall to a number of British newspapers in response to reports that Wilkie Collins would complete the novel.[74] Dickens' publishers are here rejecting the possibility of a completion by another hand, despite the loss of earnings that would be the result of the last six issues not being published.[75] Whether these reservations spring from their own sense of propriety or

[73]A review in the *Athenaeum* of the final published number of Dickens' text states that "all such unfinished work should be sacred. It was probably some enemy of Mr. Wilkie Collins who circulated the report that he intended to carry Charles Dickens's 'Edwin Drood' to its natural end. In all such work there is an audacity which belies any asserted respect or reverence for the original writer" ("Literature" 1870:361).

[74]I have cited the *Times*, but the notice also appears in *The Orchestra* and *The Publishers' Circular*, at least.

[75]Dickens' contract with Chapman and Hall had a clause in case of his death. Some have wanted to see this "death clause" as an indication that Dickens expected to die. Among them is Arthur Waugh, who was the managing director of Chapman and Hall from 1902 to 1930 and who wrote in his *A Hundred Years of Publishing. Being the Story of Chapman and Hall, Ltd* (1930) that

> when it came to making a contract for Dickens' next novel, *Edwin Drood*, a clause appeared which had never been inserted in any of his earlier agreements … : "If the said Charles Dickens shall die during the composition of the said work of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, or shall otherwise become incapable of completing the said work for publication in twelve monthly numbers as agreed, it shall be referred to John Forster … to determine the amount which shall be repaid by said Charles Dickens, his executors or administrators, to the said Frederic Chapman as a fair compensation for so much of the

from a worry that allowing someone else to complete it will cause a negative reaction from readers, the note is indicative of the perception that only the author could or should complete his text. This position of Chapman and Hall's was confirmed by the postscript appended to the final instalment published, which was quoted on page 101.

This second note again emphasises the lack of any foundation for the reconstruction of the missing ending: unlike Stevenson and Thackeray, the author has left no notes or plans that might provide the authority for a completion by another hand. It places any would-be completer in the position of a first-time reader: the only basis for the construction of an ending are the "clues" to be found in the text as it stands, as they are also available to all other readers. As I demonstrated in my first chapter, however, the hermeneutic code as employed by the first-time reader is a provisional structuration, always subject to restructuring in view of new information, and especially of the closure of the end. Any such "clues" are therefore also potentially "blinds" or "false clues", and with no ending to close off the text, a reader is left with the perpetual lack of a sanctioned whole from which to construct meaning. It follows that a completer, finding themselves in the position of only one reader among others, cannot provide an authoritative ending because they do not have the

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said work as shall not have been completed for publication". (Waugh 1930:132-133)

Both Patten and Sutherland refer to a similar clause in the contract for *Our Mutual Friend*, however: "if Dickens had died in mid-serial his estate would owe compensation to an amount determined by Forster" (Patten 1978:303). See also Sutherland 1976:80. Patten also notes that we do not know whether or how the clause in the *Edwin Drood* contract was used when Dickens died (Patten 1978:316). Sutherland writes that *Edwin Drood*, even as a fragment "notched up record sales, stimulated for the first three numbers by the excitement of a new Dickens novel, and for the next three by the morbid attraction of the work now being posthumous; Dickens writing from the grave" (Sutherland 2006:110). Dickens had not written a novel in five years, the longest gap in his writing career, but he was continuously a public figure in this period, aided in part by his public readings. The interest in his new novel was therefore undiminished. According to Frederick G. Kitton, as I discussed in the preceding chapter, 50,000 copies of the first instalment was sold while Dickens was still alive (Kitton 1897:225). Still, while it would not seem that Chapman and Hall lost any money on the venture, they could in all probability have made more money if they had continued the novel's run.

authority to choose between the possible endings that are open to the unfinished text, as the author has. As I showed in my first chapter, the introduction of new information forces the reader to continuously revise their interpretations and expectations, and it is based in this continuous closing off that the reader forms, rejects and constructs new interpretations. But as this chapter will demonstrate, the reader's willingness to revise their provisional understanding in light of new information is dependent on their accepting the authority of the text. The question then becomes, where does this authority come from?

The decision to leave the reader with no direction apart from the text itself is justified by Chapman and Hall with reference to what it is thought the author would have wanted. This reluctance to intervene in Dickens' text and take on the authority to speak in his stead is characteristic of the attitude to *Edwin Drood*, as this chapter will show. Dickens' death is, unsurprisingly, central to both notes; and more importantly it comes to affect how the fragment is read. By this I mean not only that Dickens' death, causally, leaves us with an unfinished narrative which is as a result approached differently from a finished one, but also that Dickens' death itself takes on the function of an ending for the creation of meaning in the text. Instead of the narrative's own missing ending, the death of Dickens is taken as an ordering principle by some of his commentators: it becomes the end which confers importance on what has gone before and marks the pivotal parts of the text out from blinds and filler. The postscript demonstrates the tendency to order what has passed in light of Dickens' death, in that it confers particular importance on a section of the final chapter which dwells on the resurrection and the light.[76] This reflects a particular concern with the figure of

[76]It reads,

Dickens, which informs the main body of writing in relation to *Edwin Drood*. The fragment is hedged around with the particular importance given to "last words": the last passage had only been written two hours when Dickens slipped into a coma from which he never awoke. While not his last spoken words, they are his last written words; added to this is the posthumous publication of the last three issues, which John Sutherland remarks on as having a particular fascination for readers as "Dickens writing from the grave" (Sutherland 1976:110). This close association of this fragment with the author's death affects how it is received in that it comes to reinforce that reverence, that distance, which Walter Benjamin refers to as "aura" in his essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" (1936-9).

"Aura" is used by Benjamin to explore questions of authority and authenticity in works of art, and he describes it as "the unique apparition of distance, however near it may be" (Benjamin 2003:255, n11 272), a definition which he then anchors in the original "cult value" of the work of art: like the sacred object, it demands an attitude of reverence and thereby becomes unapproachable. The "cult value" is in its secularised form "displaced by the empirical uniqueness of the artist or of his creative

> "A brilliant morning shines on the old city. Its antiquities and ruins are surpassingly beautiful, with the lusty ivy gleaming in the sun, and the rich trees waving in the balmy air. Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods, and fields – or rather, from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time – penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life. The cold stone tombs of centuries ago grow warm, and flecks of brightness dark into the sternest marble corners of the building, fluttering there like wings". (Dickens 1982:216)

Other commentators also read this passage as especially important: Waugh writes that "[t]he last sheet he ever wrote contained the eloquent passage telling of the intimations of immortality as revealed upon the changing face of Nature, as it carries him back once more to the Rochester of his boyish memories" (Waugh 1930:135). In addition there are those who argue that Dickens was aware of his approaching demise and wrote the novel with this in view. For example Benny R. Reece, who argues that Dickens with this in view tailored the novel according to Greek mythology so that it could be decoded even if left unfinished (Reece 1989).

achievement" (Benjamin 2003:n12 272), but the appearance of the inherent distance is maintained.

Benjamin himself may seem to dismiss aura as a component of literature, in that the central tenet of his argument is that "what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter's aura", thereby affecting the "authority of the object" (Benjamin 2003:254). He does not fully explore it in relation to literature, only noting that there were "enormous changes brought about in literature by movable type", and declaring print "merely a special case, though an important one", before quickly moving on to photography and film (Benjamin 2003:252). However, the literary text must be said to be in a special position not explored by Benjamin: the novel is not the book; literature as a work of art can therefore not be dependent on the historical duration of the book as an object. Their auras, while linked, can therefore be approached separately. With print, the book becomes mass produced; following Benjamin, it thereby loses part of its aura as an object of art: the printed book is itself an object with a physical duration, but it is less unique and less authentic than a handwritten manuscript. However, a mass produced book can still give you the literary text; while the object that contains it lacks authenticity, the work of art remains intact: a Dickens novel cannot easily be inauthentic'.[77]

Rather than drawing its authority from the historical duration of the book's paper and binding, the novel's authority and authenticity is grounded in the perceived

[77]That happens only when another novel has been written, by another author, closely resembling the "original" (plagiarism), or when a work is published under a name (more originary and authoritative) that has not written it (forgery). Both these scenarios lead us back to the figure of the author, the "uniqueness of the artist" and "his creative achievement", as the standard for authenticity.

link with the words of the author: the artist and his creative achievement remains and is perceived as commanding reverence. The reactions to completions of Dickens' unfinished novel, as this chapter will show, indicate that the aura of the novel did not disappear with the advent of print publication; rather, the hostile reactions can fruitfully be seen as a reaction to the disturbance of the aura of the novel as a work of art. Benjamin's term is fundamentally historic, and he uses it to describe precisely a period in which the technological reproducibility of the work of art reduces or even removes the aura. As I will discuss more extensively in the opening of the second subchapter in this section (starting on page 142), Droodian completions are to a large extent written during a period in which mass literacy, newspapers and periodicals make it possible for readers to become writers and participate in or interfere with the work of art; in other words, a period in which the aura of the work of literary art is weakened (Benjamin 2003:262).

Michel Foucault, in his essay "What is an Author?" (1969), argues that the author is a cultural construction which becomes central to the Western attitude to literature from the 17th century onwards. In this chapter I propose to read Benjamin through Foucault, seeing his description of the aura as a period-specific expression of what Foucault calls the "author-function". This should clarify (and qualify) Benjamin's claims, both with respect to the "empirical uniqueness of the artist" and "his creative achievement", but it is also useful for highlighting the changes that occur in the reactions to completions of *Edwin Drood* in the first half century after Dickens' death. The analysis of reactions, especially in the second subchapter, will show how the early rejection of completions as inauthentic highlight their outer similarity to

Dickens, drawing on images of an author's pen an ink to suggest forgery while emphasising a lack of reverence; the imagery in later reactions, meanwhile, show a distinct movement away from this concern with the work of art as sacred, culminating in a celebration of pastiche, discussed in my third subchapter.

In "What is an Author?", Foucault sets out to investigate "the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it" (Foucault 1977:115). "Apparently" is a key word here: the essay rejects the simple identification of the author with the historical individual who wrote the text, and the investigation takes the form of an analysis of the author as "a function of discourse" (Foucault 1977:124); that is to say, not a natural, spontaneously formed relation of an individual to a text, but something socially constructed (which in turn contributes to other constructions, including how the text is approached as a "work", or even how it is written to begin with). Foucault writes that "[i]t would be as false to see the author in relation to the actual writer as to the fictional narrator; the author-function arises out of the scission" (Foucault 1977:129). Like the narrator, the author is a constructed "speaker", but it draws on aspects of the historical individual as well as the texts the author's name is connected to. This construction is then used to unify said texts, explain discontinuities in terms of a pattern and separate them from other texts: it consists of "projections … of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice" (Foucault 1977:127). There is no originary "founding subject"[78], from

[78]In "Order of Discourse" (1970), which builds on many of the ideas set out in "What is an Author?", Foucault rejects the idea of the "founding subject", "originating experience" of the world and language's "universal mediation" as having claims to the origin of meaning, regarding all three as philosophy's ways

which the text springs and in which it finds its meaning. What there is, however, is the social, discursive construction of a figure which is used in order to provide unity to the text and to separate it from other texts.

Foucault elaborates on the author's separateness from the historical individual earlier in the essay, when he claims that finding out that the author had a different eye colour or lived in another house than previously supposed would not change what the author's name refers to; finding out that they did not write the texts attributed to them, however, would (Foucault 1977:122). According to Foucault, then, the author is a selection of traits which are considered more or less pertinent, not a reference to a historical individual in its entirety: from this perspective Benjamin's "empirical uniqueness of the artist" would be a construct, created by and for a particular type of discourse. It is a construction which also glosses over the modifications made to the text by the publisher, the constraints imposed on it by the mode of publishing, as well as other input by people consulted as it is drafted and other accidents that have influenced the finished product; it smoothes it over and presents a unified figure that can in turn be used to unify the work and signal how it should be approached: "The function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society" (Foucault 1977:124). Texts with an author are read in a different way from others, and texts with a particular name attached to them are treated differently from those attached to another name.

The author-function, moreover, is the principle that we use to simultaneously separate texts from each other and create an internal unity and coherence in what remains; it is a part of a system of exclusions which help create the impression of

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of avoiding being confronted with the reality of discourse (Foucault 1981:65-6).

wholeness and unity: it is what we use to "group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others" (Foucault 1977:123), and what "separates one from the other, defining their form (and characterising their mode of existence)" (Foucault 1977:123). Regardless of a writing individual's actual ability to unify and create, or originate, the figure of the author is used as a discursive tool in order to order texts, to unify them and to justify the search for meaning in them. Again, this is something Foucault develops in "Order of Discourse", where he describes the author as

> a principle of grouping of discourses, conceived as the unity and origin of their meanings, as the focus of their coherence. . . . The author is asked to account for the unity of the texts which are placed under his name. He is asked to reveal or at least carry authentification of the hidden meaning which traverses them. He is asked to connect them to his lived experiences, to the real history which saw their birth. (Foucault 1981:58)

The author, then, serves as both the border which limits texts and as the justification for the search for meaning in them. This is supported by the findings of my first chapter, in which I showed that the unity of the text was central to readings "against the grain": the justification for a close reading of a text, in which the text is shown to contradict its apparent meaning, lies in the assumption that each particular creative choice is meaningful. This takes Foucault's "author-function" back to Benjamin's idea of the "aura" of the work of art as grounded in the "empirical uniqueness of the artist" and his "creative achievement". The constructedness of this idea of an artist and his artistic creation does not invalidate Benjamin's claim. "Aura" is still a very useful term, precisely because it reflects a perception of the author and the work of art which can be traced in the reactions to completions of *Edwin Drood*: it carries connotations of sacrality and unapproachability which are part of the form that the author-function to a large extent takes in relation to Dickens' unfinished novel, certainly in the late

Victorian period. Benjamin's term therefore serves as a useful period supplement to Foucault, here; the purpose of this chapter is in part to see how it changes over time.

It is because of its dependence on the author as the principle of unity and the guarantor of meaning that the unfinished narrative becomes a problem. Not just any (or anybody's) ending will do. The publishers' reluctance to sanction a completion is reflected in the attitude to completions throughout the later history of Droodiana. In an article in *The Dickensian* from 1905 George F. Gadd distinguishes between "the reverent attitude of the analyst" and "the presumptuous arrogance of the 'continuator"' (Gadd 1905b:293). Similarly, Willoughby Matchett, in 1913, writes that

> It was the peculiar fate of Dickens inadvertently to raise about his onward path a ghoulish horde of hacks anxious to filch a portion, however, small, of his overwhelming popularity. … But at his death, alas! there was a recrudescence of it in the shape of wretched sequels to his half-written *Mystery of Edwin Drood*. (Matchett 1913:296-7)

Both Gadd's and Matchett's objections employ terms which are not only distinctly negative, but which emphasise the continuator's lack of justification. The sequel-writer is presented as "presumptuous" in attempting to finish what Dickens had left uncompleted; and the word "continuator" is itself put into question by being placed in inverted commas, thereby casting doubt on the validity of the term. The main importance of Gadd's description of completions, however, lies in their opposition to what he sees as the "reverent attitude" of the speculations. "Reverent" suggests the maintenance of a proper distance, an awareness of the special status of what one is dealing with, and one's own lack of authority. This fits neatly into Benjamin's description of the aura of the authentic work of art as that which makes it unapproachable even when physically close, as the attitude to a cult object. It

indicates, then, that the outrage directed at completions is related to the attempt to transgress this limit and thereby disturb the aura of the work: completions as a form of sacrilege. Matchett, moreover, refers to them not only as "hacks" who attempt to unrightfully make money on the fame of Dickens' name, but as a "ghoulish horde", thereby comparing them to grave-robbing creatures known for feeding on the dead, violating the sanctity of the grave. Both descriptions reflect a view of unsanctioned continuations as somehow inauthentic and unrightful publications which transgress the distance of reverence required by the sanctity of the object. It suggests that the attempt to complete the fragment disturbs the aura by transgressing or ignoring that distance.

J. W. T. Ley, moreover, in an article on the collections of the Dickens House, also distinguishes the "genuine 'loving studies' propounding theories as to how Dickens would have developed the story had he lived" from completions, as treating the subject "reverently" (Ley 1908:267). This echoes Gadd three years earlier, and again emphasises the appropriate attitude as one which respects the distance to the work of art. Ley's description of the speculations as "loving" implies a purity of motive which is precisely what was lacking in completions according to Matchett's and Gadd's objections. Implicit in this description of speculations is the contrast to the completions that do *not* maintain the appropriate distance, but instead attempt to intervene in the text in order to complete it.

The general consensus that the completions are problematic is apparent when Gadd writes in *The Dickensian*, regarding Henry Morford's completion, which was the first one published, that

> Like all continuations in the fictional form, this literary effort [Morford's

> sequel] must, of course, meet with a certain amount of disapproval on principle. Attempts here and there to imitate the style of Dickens are, as might be expected, not a success. Neither do the actors in the story retain the characteristics with which we have learned to associate them: they employ their own, or similar, phrases, but that is a very different thing. Nevertheless, as an attempt to grapple with a complex problem the book is not without interest, and, if some of the threads left by the original author are incorrectly manipulated, few are entirely neglected. (Gadd 1905c:271)[79]

Gadd does not explain his claim that continuations must, "of course, be met with a certain amount of disapproval on principle". This does, however, make sense when seen as a reaction to the perceived transgression of the aura of the work: the attempt to interfere with the work as if the aura did not require reverent distance is perceived as a form of sacrilege; by reaching into the work and adding to it, they are disturbing its unity and separatedness from other texts. In Foucault's terms, they are failing to follow the rules of the discourse of the author-function, ignoring the particularity of the special status it confers on some texts and not others.

Gadd is, moreover, rejecting the authority of Morford's text as able to provide closure to Dickens' text. Instead of revising a provisional understanding of plot and characters as new information is introduced (which I have established, in my discussion of Doyle and Bayard, as the reader's approach to completed narrative even when the text is approached in a "writerly" way) the provisional understanding of plot and characters formed through the reading of Dickens' half-finished narrative is here used as a foundation from which to assess the rest of the narrative as provided by Morford: the characters do not act as Gadd would expect them to based on his provisional understanding of the first half, and the plot is perceived to be "incorrectly

[79]Henry Morford's *John Jasper's Secret. Being a narrative of certain events following and explaining "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"* (1872) is the first published completion of Edwin Drood.

manipulated"; Gadd's description of the plot suggests that there is a "correct" way of manipulating it, which Morford has failed to achieve. Gadd himself, however, does not have access to the authorial ending, and he is here relying on his own provisional understanding of the plot based on what remains of the text, which he uses in order to assess, and reject, that of Morford. Gadd's words, then, reveal his lack of confidence in the writer of the completion, which is based in Morford's lack of authority: he is unwilling to subsume his provisional understanding of the plot to the new information provided by the completion, unlike what he would presumably have done if Dickens had written it. This supports my argument that that confidence in the end, which I discussed in my first chapter, is here dependent on the aura of the work, which in turn can be usefully described through the use of Foucault's author-function: the author is the one who can bring about the "correct end", thereby closing off the text and providing the reader with a field for the construction of meaning. The rejection of completions, then, spring from a double foundation: the disruption of the aura caused by their intervention in the writing of the work, and the related problem of a lack of authority to close off the text: the completions do not partake in the aura and authority of the original work, and therefore cannot set themselves apart from other readers with equal access to Dickens' text.

From the very beginning of Droodiana the writers and publishers of such completions have shown awareness of their own lack of creative authority, and they have employed a variety of strategies to attempt to remedy the situation. Morford's completion may again serve as a preliminary example: it was originally published anonymously, but was later re-issued and even translated into French as being the

work of Charles Dickens, Jr. and Wilkie Collins.[80] In 1908 B. W. Matz, then editor of *The Dickensian*, wrote an article for *The Bookman* about Droodiana, in which he specifically objects to the implication of this completion's strategy:

> In the preface to the published book, the authors (who it must be remembered are stated to be Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens the Younger) state that although no written data or records were discovered, Dickens
>
> > "had not been entirely reticent as to the scope of that work; and hints had been supplied by him, unwittingly, for a much closer estimate of the bearings of those portions remaining unwritten than he could probably have believed in life. All these, with many more particulars, laboriously but lovingly procured, have fallen into the hands of the writers of this concluding story, who believe that they are conveying a benefit as well as a pleasure to the world in setting at rest the thousands of speculations to which the non-explanation of the 'Mystery' has given rise,"
>
> and further confess that they have carried out what they have "fully traced and identified as the intention of the writer". (Matz 1908a:232)[81]

There are two main points to be drawn from this quotation. The first is the awareness of the writers that what is desired by the reader is specifically Dickens' intended ending: their reference is to hints and indications given by the author, and their stated goal is to trace and identify this "intention of the writer". The second is the effect of the use of the names of Charles Dickens, Jr. and Wilkie Collins as Matz presents it. Matz' objection is to the change in authority which happens when the words he quotes go from being those of an anonymous writer to being attributed to the son and the author friend of the original author. It takes on that authority which was the foundation for the plot sketches of Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* and Thackeray's

[80]It is not clear whether this was an accidental attribution, since there were rumours that Collins would write a completion and Charles Dickens, Jr. did write a dramatisation, or a conscious decision by the publishers to falsely lend authority to the completion.

[81]In the interest of clarity I have lifted out the long quote within the quote in order to separate it from Matz' discussion of it. In the original the quote is not separated from Matz' commentary except by quotation marks.

Denis Duval, and which also forms the basis for the completion of Stevenson's *St. Ives* by Arthur Quiller-Couch: the author's creative intention communicated to those around him before he died, as well as the authority attached to an established authorial name. When attributed to Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens, Jr., the words are no longer limited to the "clues" and "hints" in the text alone, but take on the possibility of additional information communicated by the author to those around him. As Matz emphasises by reiterating the attribution, this proximity lends credibility to their access to the author's intentions in a way which would not have been available to an unknown American writer who had never met Dickens. The attempt to provide the completion with legitimacy, then, is done by presenting it as a credible approximation of the "correct ending", and this in turn is done through the suggestion of the authorial intention expressed outside the text. As such, this strategy, while in this case fraudulent, echoes those employed by the commentators of *Weir* and *Duval*, but perhaps especially the completions of *St. Ives*, as discussed in the preceding chapter: the creative authority of the author is only accessible to the continuators in so far as they can anchor it in another that is accessible to them.

This chapter will look at the strategies completions employ in their approach to readers in dealing with their own lack of creative authority. It will also analyse the reviewers' reactions to these strategies in order to find out whether they are successful. There are eleven Droodian completions, but this chapter will focus on five of these as being especially fruitful for this discussion.[82] The first of these is the

[82]The remaining six are as follows: Henry Morford's *John Jasper's Secret* (1871), which I have mentioned in this introduction. Percy T. Carden's *The Murder of Edwin Drood* (1920), which falls somewhere between a speculation and a completion, and does not take on the authority to write, but instead employs the pattern available from another confession written by Dickens to have Jasper recount the plot Carden envisages, with footnotes explaining how he has arrived at his conclusions. The anonymous *Dickens' The Mystery of Edwin Drood, Completed by A Loyal Dickensian* (1927) and Edwin Harris'

"Spirit Pen" completion by Thomas P. James, which, through its claim to have access to the creative intention of Charles Dickens, will allow me to highlight the importance of the perception of authorial creative authority in how the completions are approached by readers, in that both aesthetic evaluation and willingness to accept new information as a modification of the earlier text is dependent on the belief that the text emanates from Dickens.

In the second part of the chapter, I will show how the perception of the completions in relation to the authority of the original text changes from one focused on the use of stylistic qualities associated with Dickens to one with a greater emphasis on plot. This will be done by looking at the discrepancies between, and reactions to, the two editions of Gillan Vase's *A Great Mystery Solved* (published in 1878 and 1914), as well as the difference from Walter E. Crisp's completion, which was published for the first time in 1914. It will show not only the increasing awareness of the writers and publishers that they are not perceived as having the authority to complete Dickens' text, but also a greater emphasis on the plausibility of the working out of the plot and less patience with the introduction of new characters and plot lines.

Finally, I will show how the plot outline of Forster becomes the main authority for the completions, but that they still employ additional strategies in order to justify their texts. By looking at Leon Garfield's and Charles Forsyte's completions, both published in 1980, I will explore the difference between the two strategies of illusion

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John Jasper's Gatehouse (1931), both of which follow Forster in the main, and which would not contribute much to my argument which is not already covered by Crisp, Garfield and Forsyte. And Ruth Alexander's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1935) and Michael West's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1952), which I have chosen not to go into because they both anchor their completions in extra-textual concerns: Alexander in the requirements of the film which the ending is based on, and West in the importance of spelling (which here turns out to be at the heart of the revelation of the mystery) in what is a school text which also takes the liberty of simplifying Dickens' language for its audience.

and hermeneutic analysis, and simultaneously show how the attitude to the author in relation to his work changes subtly.

4.1 The Spiritualist completion (1873)

If the reader's confidence in the end relies on the creative authority of the author, and the author's premature death and the lack of an authorially sanctioned outline of the plot denies the reader this access to closure, then the history of Droodian speculation is an attempt to remedy this situation by placing other authorities in its stead. All these authorities, however, are provisional and reflect an attempt to limit the scope of the creative liberty of the author in order to present a theory of a plausible outline of the end to the plot as intended by the author. The majority of completions, however, are left without a way of dealing directly with this lack of authority. It is in this respect that the Spiritualist completion differs in approach. By claiming to still have access to the author (and thereby to the authorial creative intention), the Spiritualists' solutions would seem to circumvent the problem that characterises much of the rest of Droodiana. The foremost example of the Spiritualist approach is the "Spirit Pen" completion by Thomas P. James, the only fully written Spiritualist completion of *Edwin Drood* published.[83] It claims to have been written by Dickens, posthumously, through a medium, and is also one of the earliest examples of Droodian completions.[84]

While most completions limit themselves to a plausible working-out of the

[83]There are other accounts of Spiritualist séances which claim to have had contact with Dickens' spirit (notably one by Arthur Conan Doyle and another by J. Cuming Walters), and Cox lists an unpublished typescript in the Dickens House collection which claims to be a completion written without any knowledge of the original work, as well as T. C. De Leon's claim that his play was written with posthumous input from Charles Dickens (Cf. Cox 1998:98, 168).

[84]Henry Morford's is the only real completion published before it (in 1872).

plot on the basis of Dickens' text, and are mainly limited to characters introduced by Dickens, James introduces fifteen major (and some minor) new characters in twenty-three new chapters, many of which are given elaborate new plot lines.[85] One such is Bessie Padler's melodramatic plot, which ties together Jasper (as her father), Princess Puffer (as her maternal grandmother) and Datchery (as her uncle and the son of Princess Puffer), in addition to introducing the new characters Mr and Mrs Padler (Bessie's adoptive father and grandmother), Sol Brobity (who takes Bessie in to give her a better life), his mother and his servant. Another is the plot of Rosa's abduction, which is instigated by Jasper, executed by the new characters Edgar and Mrs Slanduce, and then undone by Princess Puffer aided by more new characters in the form of Mr Peckraft, his clerk Mr Stollop and the housekeeper Miss Keep along the way. Finally, there is a third major plot line which concerns the resurrection of Edwin Drood. This plot reintroduces Edwin Drood under the name of Joe Sloggers, and includes Datchery as pretending to be his uncle, as well as Durdles (who is sent as Drood's messenger to Mr Peckraft, who turns out to be Drood's father's business partner). In addition it also makes use of the new character of Stollop and introduces his friend Mr Cotley in a subplot which has Mr Stollop fall in love with Rosa and subsequently get drunk in the company of Durdles.[86] He also introduces a Mr

[85]The major new characters are Mr Fopperty Padler, Mrs Padler (his mother), Bessie Padler (his adoptive child), Sol Brobity (brother of Mrs Sapsea), Mrs Brobity (his mother), Razor (Mr Brobity's servant), Joe Sloggers (introduced as the son of Datchery's sister, but really Edwin Drood in disguise), Edgar Slanduce, Mrs Slanduce (criminals), Peter Peckraft (Drood's partner in the antiquities business), Mr Stollop (his clerk), Miss Keep (Mr Peckraft's householder), Mr Boalslasher, Mr Medagent (literary gentlemen), and Mr Cotley (friend of Stollop). The inclusion of Joe Sloggers in this list is debatable, but because Drood is often thought to have been killed, I have included it. In addition to these come a few minor characters.

[86]James, in fact, goes so far as to promise, in his introduction, the writing of a whole new, entirely posthumous, Dickens novel: *The Adventures of Bockley Wickleheap*, the first chapter of which "is already finished; and opening with all the peculiar characteristics of the author, bids fair to equal anything from his pen while on earth" (James 1873:x). This is another indication that James attempts to place his writing under the sphere of Dickens as author, to be approached with the attitude that requires.

Boalslasher and Mr Medagent neither of whom have any discernible effect on the plot, and who seem to be introduced primarily as "Dickensian characters", thereby mimicking a stylistic trait Dickens is famous for, and which will be discussed later in this chapter.

This freedom to create new characters and plot lines is a staple of the author's creative liberty, which I discussed in my first chapter, in the context of Doyle: it is the major type of unforeseeable developments in the text, which if the authority is accepted lead the reader to reassess the provisional understanding of the text and discard readings which do not accommodate the new information. In line with my argument in the preceding chapters, that the author is perceived as possessing a creative authority that supersedes that of the reader or secondary writers, this freedom of creation has generally not been claimed by the writers of Droodian completions: with the exception of occasional minor characters, they have stuck to manipulations of Dickens' characters and the plot line(s) as they can be discerned in the unfinished text.[87] I read this trend as an attempt to keep the completion (or speculations) as potentially close to Dickens' intended plot as possible: the moment another writer invents a wholly new character, the link to Dickens is severed and the illusion of reading the "correct" ending is severely weakened.

In claiming to proceed from the author, the "Spirit Pen" completion avoids the problem of Dickens' death, presenting it as an inconvenience rather than an insuperable barrier; and it is therefore free to introduce new characters and plots. As long as its claim to be directly channelling Dickens' intentions is accepted, it can be disappointing, even downright bad, but not "wrong". This is apparent in the reactions

[87]Other completions, with the exception of Vase, only introduce some very minor characters.

to the "Spirit Pen" completion: they diverge radically depending on whether the claim to authorial authority is accepted or not. In the non-believers, the reaction ranges from anger and outrage to ridicule. One of the earliest, from March 1873, before the book was even published, calls it "infamous" and states that "[s]urely flogging is too good for ruffians like these Spiritualists, who 'put the hug' on the honoured dead, and pick their pockets of posthumous fame!" ("No Mystery" 1873:90). The anger seems to be inspired by the perceived mercenary motives of the writer of the completion. The image used is of a particularly vicious and violent form of pick-pocketing.[88] This is the same sense of wrongful appropriation which could be found in Matchett's image of a ghoulish horde. In both, there is at the core of the image a sense of violation done to Dickens' memory and artistic creation.

There are clear indications in James' text that there is an attempt to imitate Dickens' style. In part, this is done by providing scenes which are strongly reminiscent of scenes found in the original fragment: Jasper shows Crisparkle his diary at the end of chapter 16 (which also forms the end of the 4th instalment) (Dickens 1982:148), and James has him do the same in the new text (James 1873:251); Jasper faints, in the original text, as Grewgious informs him that Rosa and Edwin had called off their engagement (Dickens 1982:138), and the fainting fit is repeated in front of Datchery in the new text (James 1873:249). There would also seem to be a perception among other would-be continuators that a Dickens text requires a dying child, as James is not alone in including one of these (in his case Bessie Padler).

[88]James H. Winter describes it: "On July 17 two men 'put the hug on' Sir Hugh Pilkington, MP, ... One attacker approached from behind and twisted a cord around Pilkington's neck and the second robbed him and pushed him, gasping into the gutter" (Winter 1993:61).

James, moreover, also makes extended use of particular phrases which show up in the original fragment. Most notably, at the very beginning of *Edwin Drood*, in the second chapter, the reader is told, "[o]nce for all, a look of intentness and intensity — a look of hungry, exacting, watchful, and yet devoted affection — is always, now and ever afterwards, on the Jasper face whenever the Jasper face is addressed in this direction" (Dickens 1982:6-7). James picks up on this phrase, "the Jasper face", and from the very beginning of the completion employs it enthusiastically: "Mingled doubt and surprise come upon the Jasper face; astonishment seems to have paralyzed the Jasper lips" (James 1873:219), "[t]he Jasper face turns a little red" (James 1873:233), "the Jasper arms drop listlessly at his side" (James 1873:249), and even "[t]he Fopperty eyes retreat to take counsel" (James 1873:292) at one point. This exaggerated use of identifiable aspects of Dickens' text, which borders on parody, has not upset commentators, however, as much as the claim to speak on behalf of Dickens.

Later reactions are characterised by ridicule. The use of laughter as a mode of subversion seems to have been the main British approach to Spiritualism in general, and the choice of strategy may spring from that. James F. Muirhead writes, in a note in *The Academy* in 1905, that,

> It is a thousand pities that Mr. Walters and Mr. Lang were unaware, in their controversy over "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," that Charles Dickens himself devoted part of his leisure after leaving the world of the flesh to completing that fascinating book. At least so we are informed by a volume published at Brattleboro, Vermont, by T. P. James in 1874 and entitled, "Part II of the Mystery of Edwin Drood, by the spirit-pen of Charles Dickens through a Medium." According to this precious addition to our libraries Datchery was a son of the Princess Puffer; Edwin Drood comes to life again and marries Rosa; Neville dies opportunely, just after his innocence has been proved; Crisparkle marries Helen[sic]; and poor Tartar is silently dropped. Among other conclusions to be drawn from the volume, we find that Dickens in the Other World seems to associate chiefly with imperfectly educated Americans, whose idioms and grammar

> he has adopted in completing his novel. (Muirhead 1905:1365-6)

Again, the objections are based in the handling of the plot and the style, as well as a sense that Dickens has been tainted by the completion, all of which are familiar from objections to other completions where the authority is not accepted.[89] Muirhead's lack of confidence in the completion is apparent in his description of the plot: Drood "comes to life again", suggesting that he had been dead, rather than having been alive (but out of sight) all along. This is an indication of his rejection of the authority of the completion: the words describe, not a revision of the understanding of what has gone before in light of new information, but a reversal of an established fact: Drood is not "alive after all", but has to be revived from his previous state of being dead. Tartar being "silently dropped", moreover, suggests furtiveness which must be seen in the light of the speculations of the period: following John Forster, as well as indications in the text, Tartar is the main contender in the question of who would have married Rosa if Dickens had completed the novel among those who do not believe Drood is alive. The implication of the dropping of Tartar, therefore, can be read as a comment on Drood coming back to life and thereby taking up what is thought to be Tartar's place as love interest (by marrying Rosa). Seen in this context, the silent dropping of Tartar entails a similar change to the perceived plot as the "coming to life again" of Drood. Like Gadd, Muirhead is evaluating, and rejecting, the completion's plot based on his own provisional understanding of the fragment, rather than revising them in

[89]This idea of Dickens being tainted by completions can be illuminated with reference to Foucault again: if the author, and what the name of the author refers to, is dependent on the works the name is given to cover, it follows that how *Edwin Drood* is interpreted comes to be important. As the final expression of Dickens, it takes on the importance of an ending (which, as I discussed in my first chapter, takes on the organising effect in making sense of a life as well as plots), and the status of *Edwin Drood* therefore plays an integral part in the construction of Dickens as author: whether it is a competent, perfect attempt at a new genre, and Dickens died at the height of his powers; or whether it is the feeble writing of a failed old man, barely able to write, as George Bernhard Shaw claimed.

light of new information. This indicates that he does not see James' text as more authoritative than his own provisional understanding of the text, in which Drood is dead and Tartar will probably marry Rosa.

The core of the attack, however, relies on the comic idea of Charles Dickens in the afterlife surrounded by uneducated Americans, picking up their bad habits. This image refers to the completion's inability to convincingly imitate Dickens' style, which is an objection levelled at all completions of *Edwin Drood* (as a result of their attempts to, precisely, imitate Dickens' style), but it highlights the incongruity of what is purportedly Dickens himself failing to provide the reader with authentic "Dickensian" writing. This underscores the sarcasm of the hyperbolic endorsement in the opening words: the speculations and earnest debates of J. Cuming Walters and Andrew Lang (who had both published books that year, endeavouring to find the "correct" plot through analysis of the fragment) are thereby presented as the ones approaching the fragment in the appropriate way, while the Spiritualist completion can be dismissed.

The use of sarcasm subverts the authority of the completion and how it is justified rather than engage with it on its own terms or oppose it directly as a forgery, the implication being that it is not worth taking seriously. Gadd, in his overview of solutions to *Edwin Drood* for *The Dickensian* earlier the same year highlights the main issues objected to by those who do not accept the authority of the completion, which are the handling of plot and characters, and the language:

> Not a few of the original characters are altogether abandoned, without regard to any possible purpose for which they were created, and new puppets are introduced in a spirit of irresponsible prodigality, tending to burden the final chapters with a crowd of ticketed marionettes. But those faults are as nothing in presence of the awful grammatical vagaries, the

> inexplicable blunders in relation to locality or situation, the entire disregard of early device, suggestion, and definite statement, confounding the artistic sense at every turn of the leaf. (Gadd 1905c:272)

This discussion of language contains the same objections as those raised in Muirhead's note, where errors and americanisms are the chief concerns.[90] While Dickens has the power to create "original characters", James' creations are "mere puppets" and "ticketed marionettes": they lack the infusion of spirit which Dickens is seen as capable of providing, and are instead lifeless pieces which require overt manipulation. The emphasis on "the purpose for which they were created", moreover, explicitly brings up the assumption that they have been introduced with a specific purpose in mind and that a completion of the story should attempt to make sense of such a purpose if it is to be attempted at all; the "irresponsible prodigality" of James' own creations, meanwhile, suggests the lack of such a purpose. Gadd's other objections also spring from the unwillingness to subsume the reader's provisional understanding of plot to the new information provided in the non-authorial text, which is in turn based in the rejection of the completion's claim to authority. The

[90]Gadd writes that

> Certainly it is not extremely distressing to learn that "Grewgious is *most* always at home," or that he *loaned* the portrait to Tartar," or that Rosa wondered if Drood "*had changed any*" during his long absence. The position of Brattleborough on the map prepares us, in some measure, for such-like attacks. But when we are told that "bidding each other good-night, the reverend gentleman wended his way home-ward," or that "a quarrel takes place between *he* and young Landless," our sorrow is more than that of parting, on the one hand, or of sympathetic agitation on the other. (Gadd 1905c:272)

The corruption of Dickens' voice is one of the main recurrent objections. While the exaggeration of his sorrow on being faced with poor language is part of the hyperbolic tendency which is at the centre of the comic effect in this piece, the recurrent nature of the objection suggests that the attribution of this sub-optimal language to Dickens causes real consternation among reviewers. There is a sense that Dickens is being damaged by this misattribution. If seen in the context of Foucault's assertion that the author's name, and what we understand by it, is determined by which texts it is seen to encompass, this makes sense: if Dickens has written this, then that changes who Dickens is, and the suggestion that he has threatens to taint Dickens' actual writing, and through it his legacy.

"inexplicable blunders in relation to locality or situation" are judged as such based on a provisional understanding of Cloisterham as Rochester, which allows readers with the knowledge that Dickens' description of one corresponds to the appearance of the other to expand on Dickens' descriptions in the actual text. In deviating from this early description, Dickens would merely have moved his fictional town away from Rochester, forcing the reader to reassess the relation between the various places that are mentioned. Because Gadd has no confidence in the completion provided by James, the provisional understanding of Cloisterham as Rochester is used to assess the discrepancies as errors.

The same holds true for the objection to the "entire disregard for early device, suggestion, and definitive statement". The basis for "early device" is, as I discussed in my first chapter, the hermeneutic code's provision for the moment of *anagnorisis* in which the reader looks back over the plot and ideally experiences what Kermode refers to as "disconfirmation followed by a consonance" (Kermode 1967:18) in the text. The satisfaction of this expectation hinges on the introduction of clues early on, which in view of the ending can be identified as important. As I explained in the preceding chapters as well as earlier in this one, however, the hermeneutic code is not readily available to the first-time reader and must be revised along the way. There is therefore no way for Gadd to have unequivocally identified early devices and suggestions of what is to come later: his rejection is founded in the rejection of the authority of the text, which cannot supersede his own provisional interpretation. The liberties taken by James in introducing new characters and plot lines therefore become unacceptable.

What non-believers would seem to object to in this completion, then, is what is perceived as a fraudulent attempt to capitalise on the name of Dickens, as well as the disappointing language, and the lack of coherence for the narrative as a whole, with its inability to solve the perceived enigmas of Dickens' text. By the time of Matz's *Bookman* article in 1908, mainstream Droodiana is merely dismissive. He repeats the objections of earlier commentators as a litany of faults:

> The book has a dedication and a preface from Dickens's spirit, both of which are so absurd it would be futile to quote from them. The "medium" also supplies a preface equally stupid.. . . Apart from this, however, the book cannot be treated seriously. It is ungrammatical, badly written, and as Mr. Sapsea would say, "un-English." It is a curiosity, that is all, and the man who perpetrated it did not know the locality it had for a setting, and hardly mastered the details of the unfinished novel (Matz 1908a:233-4).

This very strong language from the editor of *The Dickensian* reflects the general attitude to this completion: it is "absurd", "stupid", "un-English", "ungrammatical" and "badly written", and not worth the energy to refute it.

I have spent so much time establishing the negative reactions to all aspects of this text because the reaction in Spiritualist journals is markedly different. *The Spiritualist*, which mentions the claim for the first time in September 1873, citing a long piece on the subject from *The Springfield Daily Union* of July 16th 1873, states that "if, as stated, the Spiritualists of Brattleborough recognise the medium as a genuine one, it gives considerable weight to the narrative, because there is no instance on record of experienced Spiritualists having been deceived by the imposture of one person for any considerable length of time" ("Alleged" 1873: 322). Having thus established itself as provisionally willing to accept the authority of the completion as emanating from Dickens himself, *The Spiritualist*'s assessment of the text shows a radical difference from that of reviewers who do not accept the authority of the

completion: “The literary matter itself fully equals that of Charles Dickens, and must have been written by someone of considerable genius and ability” (“Alleged” 1873: 322). This is the text which Matz would later dismiss as “stupid”, “absurd” and “badly written”. The attribution of the text to Dickens would seem to affect not only the attitude to the plotting and structuring of the text, but in this case also the aesthetic judgement of the piece. While it must be emphasised that this is a commentary in a magazine with a clear bias (its agenda is to promote the Spiritualist cause), it is not clear that that agenda would be served by praise for a text which is not of the standard expected.

The original article from *The Springfield Daily Union*, which also accepts the claim, is even more enthusiastic:

> we are startled to find in the very first chapter a wonderful identity with the published volume. The stitch is taken up just where it was dropped by death; and the story proceeds so completely united, the new with the old, that the sharpest-eyed critic, not knowing before where the old left off and the new began, would not be able to say, for the life of him, where Charles Dickens died! Each one of the *dramatis personæ* is as distinctly, as characteristically himself, and nobody else, in the second volume as in the first[.] … Not only this, but we are introduced to other people of the imagination (Dickens was always – shall I say *is* always? – introducing new characters up even to the last chapter of his stories) and become in like manner, thoroughly acquainted with them. These people are not duplicates of any in the first volume; neither are they commonplaces; they are *creations* … I find throughout all these chapters an extremely interesting development of the plot which was but partially laid in the first volume. Characters and incidents whose pertinency does not appear there, and who, as one reads the first volume and then stops, seem to have no part in forwarding the story towards its *dénouement*, are proved in this manuscript to have been introduced with a deliberate purpose. At the same time the new personages fill perfectly the places assigned to them, and likewise “prove their usefulness” (quoted in “The Mystery” 1873:440-442).

Not only is the text which Matz would later describe as “ungrammatical” and “badly written” here described as indistinguishable from the writing of Charles Dickens (it is

to be assumed that neither commentator considers Dickens to be a bad writer), the reader is here quite willing to submit his understanding of the plot to the authority of the new text: the story proceeds "completely united" and the plot "which was but partially laid out in the first volume" and the characters and incidents which appeared to have no importance in the original text "are proved … to have been introduced with a deliberate purpose". This directly contradicts Gadd's evaluation of it as lacking respect for "early device". The early understanding of plot is entirely revised in order to accommodate the new characters and plot lines, and the reviewer now discerns proof of a "deliberate purpose", that is to say, what Gadd calls "early device", in the original fragment. The acceptance of the authority of the new text, then, changes the understanding of the fragment as it is absorbed into the completion.

The disparity in the reactions to the spiritualist completion shows how the acceptance of the text depends on the classification of it as part of the *œuvre* of Dickens; that is to say, as subsumed under the function of Dickens as an author. The attribution of the text to Dickens changes how it is approached, both in terms of the attitude to it as an aesthetic object and in the acceptance of its ability to close off the plot and provide an authoritative ending. Moreover, rather than seeing the introductions of new characters as problematic, this reviewer applauds them as "new people of the imagination" and "*creations*", in stark contrast to Gadd's description of them as "ticketed marionettes" opposed to Dickens' "original creations". The aura of the Dickensian work changes the perception of new creations: their inclusion no longer requires justification, but serves as a goal in itself, much like any Dickens novel does not require justification: the creative liberty of the author is here accepted

as part of the foundation for James' text.

While the early Spiritualist reactions show an acceptance of the authority of the completion which radically alters how it is approached, a later article by Arthur Conan Doyle, on "The Alleged Posthumous Writings of Great Authors", *The Forthnightly Review* in 1927, shows a more cautious approach which, however, ends up in a more extreme expression of the aura of the work as connected to the author. Doyle was an enthusiastic proponent of spiritualism, but in the article he does not share in the unquestioning endorsement of James' text which characterised the early spiritualist reception: while cautiously optimistic he professes to evaluate the claim of the medium without prejudice. His arguments in favour of the book as genuine are particularly interesting in this context because they problematise the access to the authorial intention, without dismissing the completion as irrelevant.

The main difference compared to the early Spiritualist reactions is that Doyle does not dispute that James' text is inferior to the first half of *Edwin Drood*. While he does attempt to demonstrate that the language is Dickensian by presenting two passages from Dickens and two from the completion and daring the reader to choose between them, his main argument is that one would expect a Spiritualist completion to be inferior to the text written by the living author:

> Let us predicate in the first instance that if the spiritualists' hypothesis is true, and if things are carried out exactly as they say, then one would expect the posthumous work to be inferior to that of the living man. In the first place, he is filtering it through another brain which may often misinterpret or misunderstand. . . . In the second place the writer has entered upon a new life with a new set of experiences, and with the tremendous episode of physical dissolution between him and the thoughts of earth. This also may well show itself in his style and diction. The most that we can hope for is something which is strongly reminiscent of the deceased writer (Doyle 1927:721).

The concern here is primarily with the "Dickensian" style. The Spiritualist sequel, according to Doyle, may proceed from the author, but the process of filtering Dickens' intention through the impure channel of James will irrevocably change it on the way. The description of the creative act, here, is beginning to sound very much like the experience of reading or interpretation: the meaning must filter through another mind and it can be changed along the way. Add to this that the author's experiences, and possibly his ideas for the novel, will have changed with his removal from earthly life, and that his "style and diction" are likely to have been affected; what one might expect is then something no more like Dickens' original text would have been than what can be found in the completions written by writers who know Dickens well, and perhaps even less so. The justification of the text is here still very much in line with what one would expect from the operations of the Foucaultian author-function, however: the possibility of the failure of James as reader is qualified by the additional explanatory power of Dickens' changed circumstances. The death of Dickens, which earlier Spiritualist reactions had seemed to see primarily as overcome, rather than a factor in itself, is here presented as part of the explanatory power of the author, accounting for the problems with the text as we find it.

What is more, the plot itself may change as a result of the author's new, posthumous outlook:

> The actual solution of the plot, as epitomised by Mr. Gadd[91], does certainly seem unlikely, especially as regards the personality of Datchery, and the solution of the mystery would seem unworthy of Dickens. But that is to suppose that Dickens encumbered by Mr. James, the medium, is as free in his mental processes as Dickens alone. Some allowance must be made (Doyle 1927:726-7).

[91]Doyle has not read the completion as a whole. He is basing his discussion on extracts from the text published in *Rifts in the Veil* (1878) and George Gadd's description of the plot, presumably in the article cited above.

With not only expression, but also characters and plot open to changes in the author's creative intention, as well as the influence of the medium, then, the Spiritualist completion as Doyle describes it no longer holds out the promise of the ending as it would have been had Dickens lived, even if the claim to authority is taken as genuine and the text is understood to proceed from the author. Having made "some allowances" for the changed circumstances, his conclusion is that "[n]o one with any real critical faculty could say that the result was an entirely unworthy one, though if written by the living Dickens it would certainly not have improved his reputation" (Doyle 1927:727).[92] Unlike in the early completions, the attribution of the text to Dickens does not automatically come with an understanding of it as of a certain aesthetic standard. The discrepancies, however, are explained with reference to a perceived change in the author's circumstances. This is in accordance with Foucault's description of the explanatory power of the author-function as "a principle of unity in writing where any unevenness of production is ascribed to changes caused by evolution, maturation or outside influences" (Foucault 1977:128). While it would seem to be more cautious in its claims with regard to the aesthetic standard of the novel, therefore, Doyle's article in fact serves to emphasise the explanatory power of the author when his connection to the text in question is accepted.

The appeal of the completion can no longer be seen as that of an intended, "correct ending", if a correct ending is one that has been intended from the beginning, with hints and clues implanted by the author in order to, in turn, be lifted out by the reader. However, it maintains its potential authority as authored by Dickens, and the

[92]He describes it elsewhere as "like Dickens – but Dickens gone flat. The fizz, the sparkle, the spontaneity of it is gone. But the trick of thought and manner remain" (Doyle 1927:723).

aura which that entails. This is the reverse of the situation all other *Edwin Drood* completions find themselves in.[93] They attempt to provide a plausible continuation of the plot within the frame laid down by Dickens while he was alive, in an approximation to the language and style of Dickens. But they cannot partake of the authority and aura of the Dickensian text, and are in fact reviled as a result of their intrusion into that text.

4.2 Changing standards (1878-1914)

While the terms "aura" and "author-function" are useful for exploring the negative reactions to completions, it should be stressed that the objections are not homogenous or unchanging, reflecting a fixed phenomenon. Both Benjamin and Foucault emphasise the historicity and mutability of their terms. Foucault explicitly states that "the 'author-function' … does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses at all times and in any given culture" (Foucault 1977:130); Benjamin writes that,

> To the extent that the cult value of a painting is secularized, the impressions of its fundamental uniqueness become less distinct. In the viewer's imagination, the uniqueness of the phenomena holding sway in the cult image is more and more displaced by the empirical uniqueness of the artist or of his creative achievement. To be sure, never completely so – the concept of authenticity always transcends that of proper attribution. … Nevertheless, the concept of authenticity still functions as a determining factor in the evaluation of art; as art becomes secularized, authenticity displaces the cult value of the work. (Benjamin 2003:272 n12)

The "aura" develops out of the reverence for the cult image, but then attaches itself to the "uniqueness of the artist or of his creative achievement", and lodges itself in "the

[93] If you add the possibility that another spirit has fraudulently presented himself as Dickens (which is a possibility raised by Doyle in his article, and later accepted as a fact by him following a séance in which he claimed to have received a communication from the real spirit of Dickens in which the latter disavowed any hand in James' text), even the devout Spiritualist is left without the possibility of certainty with regards to how Dickens would have completed his novel.

concept of authenticity" as its defining characteristic, only to then diminish in an age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art. Benjamin is here discussing the reaction to a painting. In the particular context of literature, his claim that "the concept of authenticity transcends that of proper attribution" is problematised by Foucault, as he showed that the two processes are tied to each other in the construction of the "author" and the "work" as modes of discourse. Even with this clarification, however, Benjamin's observation regarding the changeability of the reception of the aura is important: the aura is not an inherent quality of the work, but something readers of a particular period attribute to it: it is located "in the viewer's imagination", dependent on the discourse in which it is placed in order to make sense. Historicising the reception therefore becomes important.

The period in which *Edwin Drood* and the early completions are written, the second half of the nineteenth century, follows closely that development of written culture which Benjamin describes as characterised by "the distinction between author and public [being] about to lose its axiomatic character" (Benjamin 2003:262). He refers to the increasing availability of periodicals and opportunities for readers to participate in written culture as producers, and claims that the perception of the author as a special individual is put into question by the general public's ability to become writers themselves, or to pass between the roles of writer and reader more easily. In Benjamin this is tied to the disappearance of the aura, as it lessens the distance between the art work and its creator, and the reader or consumer. The attempt by Dickens' readers to complete his unfinished text is part of this development. The completions can be described in terms of a disturbance of the aura of the work, or a

failure to observe the rules of discourse surrounding the author-function. The hostile reaction to the completion can then be read as a reaction to what is perceived as a threat to the aura of the work. By interfering with the work, the completers are transgressing the reverential distance required, provoking a reaction which sees it as a form of sacrilege.

While there is a consistent resistance to the completions' attempt to take on the authority to write out the ending, however, this sub-chapter will show that there is also a shift of emphasis in reactions, from the appropriation of style and characters to a greater concern with the authority to plot. In the 35 years between the publication of the first and second editions of the first British completion of Dickens' text, *The Great Mystery Solved* (1878) by Gillan Vase,[94] Droodian speculations find a forum in *The Dickensian* and come to dominate the discussions of the fragment. This period covers the birth and peak of Droodian textual production.[95] By comparing the completion and reactions to it at the very beginning of the period to the completions and reactions after its peak, but while it is still an important part of the literary culture of its day, I will show how the "Droodian" concerns of plotting come to replace the outrage at the attempt to appropriate the "Dickensian" style.[96]

[94]Gillan Vase is a pseudonym: her real name was Elizabeth Palmer Pacht Newton. While British, Vase did not live in Britian at the time. As a whole the British seem to have been reluctant to complete *Edwin Drood* in sequel form. The first one written and published in Britain does not arrive until 1914, when both W. E. Crisp's completion and the second edition of Gillan Vase's were published.

[95]While there is some speculation regarding the intended plot immediately after Dickens' death, the methodical discussion and analysis that comes to characterise Droodiana only really begins in 1884 and reaches its high point in 1905 (the year *The Dickensian* is founded), followed by a second peak in 1912. These two years alone see well over a hundred publications on the question of how the plot would have developed, and Cox notes that a quarter of the contents of his annotated bibliography is produced in what he calls "The Golden Decade" between 1905 and 1914 (Cox 1998:xv).

[96]The centrality of both Dickens and the question of *Edwin Drood* to the literary culture of 1914 is illustrated by the "Trial of John Jasper" arranged by the Dickens Fellowship in London, where G. K. Chesterton served as the judge, George Bernhard Shaw as the Jury foreman, and Arthur Waugh, J. Cuming Walters, B. W. Matz, William Pett Ridge, Hilaire Belloc, Oscar Browning and William Archer among others in a jury mainly consisting of authors and critics. This trial will be discussed more fully

Vase's completion was first published as a three-volume novel, in 40 chapters altogether, that is to say rather longer than Dickens' remaining six issues; and while her introduction of new characters and plot lines are still limited compared to the "Spirit Pen" completion five years earlier, she takes more liberties in that respect than all the other completion-writers.[97] The new character she introduces generally have little effect on the development of the plot, however, and usually serve mainly as character portraits or opportunities to add melodrama.[98] Despite numbering more than twenty, Vase's new characters are therefore less obtrusive than James': Vase's completion is a text in three volumes of more than 300 pages each, and the number of new, if minor, characters must be seen in light of this.

Vase, in 1878, makes no claim to authorial inspiration of the spiritualist kind.[99] There is no attempt to argue her position or explain her reasons for choosing the plot she has written out, nor any attempt to ground it in reference to Dickens beyond the stylistic choices seized on by commentators. The main strategy of her completion is an attempt to create the illusion of Dickens' style. She repeats characterisations and phrases, introduces a mix of hypocritical and sentimental

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in my final chapter.

[97]The length of this completion compared to the original fragment can be appreciated when it is known that Dickens' text has only 23 chapters, and was only one chapter short of the half way mark.

[98]There is Madge and Madge's mother, Mrs Thompson, in whose house Edwin Drood (under the name of Robert Brandis) recovers from the ordeal of Jasper's attack, under Madge's loving care; Revd. Jeremiah Turnbull, who counsels Mrs Thompson to turn Drood out when all his money is spent; a bricklayer, who dissuades Drood from suicide, and his wife Mary; Josiah and William, who are after Jasper to bring him to prison; as well as an assortment of minor characters like Mrs Billickin's cook, Mrs Crisparkle's maid, Mary, and the maid's lover, the Dean's family, a doctor, a schoolmaster, a new choir master, a boy called Billy Jones, pub owners, Mrs Muddle (Jasper's landlady in London), her maid Betsy, a Ned Nobbles, a landlady in Brighton (where Rosa goes on holiday), two goalers and a little girl.

[99]In the 1912 *Bookman*, however, Vase is quoted as saying that "I am no spiritualist, but really it often seemed to me as if I were only the amanuensis of some one else who dictated. Several chapters, and those the best, were written straight on end without the alteration of a single word" ("News Notes" 1912:144). The implication is that if one is inclined to believe in spiritualism, then her completion might be as legitimate as that of the "Spirit Pen". This could be read as a retroactive attempt to legitimate the introduction of new characters and storylines.

characters and imitates iconic scenes from other Dickens books.[100] The completion includes a preface which states that

> In consideration of the circumstance that the book is but the continuation of another, it has been deemed advisable that I should issue it with a few prefatory words.
>
> I am well aware that this ambitious attempt of mine, to finish a work commenced by one of England's most illustrious writers will be almost sure to meet with opposition; and, very likely, my audacious venture may be punished . . . .Yet there is one thing encourages me to hope for something better, and it is this: I believe Englishmen to be too just in the aggregate to condemn any one, however weak and feeble, unheard. (Vase 1878c:i)

Whether the scruples which have deemed it advisable to preface the three volume work with an explanation are those of Vase herself, or, as an early reviewer suggests, those of her publisher, it reflects an awareness of the perception that completing the fragment is problematic because she is continuing, unauthorised, the work of another:[101] "the circumstance that the book is but the continuation of another" requires comment and external justification which, it is thereby implied, an original work springing from Gillan Vase would not.[102] There is only reference to how it "will be almost sure to meet with opposition" and then the very ambiguous description of the

[100]Vase is not alone in this strategy. There is a general consensus among the majority of Droodians from the very beginning that Neville will die, based in references to his sickly appearance and the lack of a prospective wife that would promise a happy ending. In the completions, however, there is a tendency to include death scenes which have no discernible basis in the fragment as it stands. I have already mentioned the "Spirit Pen" completion, where Betsy Paddler is introduced only to die in a scene reminiscent of Little Nell; in Vase, Madge is similarly introduced only to die; and in Crisp, Deputy's death echoes Jo's in *The Bleak House*.

[101]The reviewer writes that

> [h]e does not himself appear to be afflicted with any timidity about this 'ambitious attempt to finish a work commenced by one of England's most illustrious writers;' but, since 'it has been deemed advisable' – we presume, by Mr. Vase's publishers – that he should – not apologise, of course, but, let us say, offer some explanation to his readers for what he aptly describes as this 'audacious venture'. ("Great Mystery" 1878:1271)

The reviewer is reacting to the passive construction, "it has been deemed advisable", which removes the position from Vase herself.

[102]In her own novels, published later, there is no such preface explaining the genesis of the work (Cf.Vase 1889; Vase 1900).

venture as “audacious”, which holds the double meaning of daring or intrepid, and, as the reviewer uses it, something shameless or presumptuous. Moreover, this awareness that there is something problematic about completing the work of another (or, at least, that some will perceive it as problematic) is then modified by the insistence that the work be judged, if not on its own terms then on its performance: it should not be condemned “unheard”. That is to say, it should not be “met with … disapproval on principle”, as Gadd claimed completions must be (Gadd 1905c:271). Vase’s preface indicates a belief that the problem of completions is one of quality, not principle, in that her “hope for something better” than the punishment of contemptuous silence or ridicule is founded in her belief that it might escape that fate if it is read.

The contrast between Vase’s preface and that of Walter E. Crisp, 35 years later, is striking. While Vase in 1878 acknowledges that her completion may be met with opposition because it is a completion of someone else’s work, she herself is unapologetic. Her references are all to other people’s possible reactions and the subsequent expected opposition and punishment. But as far as self-censure goes, at most she calls her work “ambitious” and “audacious”, both of which allow positive value connotations. This differs greatly from Crisp’s preface to his 1914 completion, in which he states that

> I have no doubt that every lover of the works of Charles Dickens will consider an attempt by any writer to complete the story that great master of English fiction left unfinished an act of great presumption.
>
> As I fully agree with that opinion, I now place on record my apology for having attempted the completion of ‘The Mystery of Edwin Drood’. (Crisp 1914)

Here, there is “no doubt” that completing the fragment is “an act of great presumption”, emphasising an awareness of the completion’s lack of justification and

its transgression of propriety. Unlike Vase, who will only acknowledge that *others might* consider it an affront, but without necessarily accepting this objection as legitimate, Crisp presents himself as having made a transgression which requires an apology from the outset. He is writing in the wake of 35 years of negative reactions which have proven Vase's strategy of taking on the authority and liberty of creation, and demanding the work be taken on its own merits, unsuccessful. As I suggested earlier in this chapter, the negative reaction can be understood in terms of an attempted interference with the distance which characterises the aura of the work. Vase, by disregarding the aura of Dickens' final work, and believing it to be acceptable to provide a completion, misjudged her contemporaries' perception of the aura of the work. By demonstrating his awareness of his own lack of authority, Crisp reestablishes that distance pre-emptively.

The early reviews of Vase's completion do not accept her right to complete the text. While he does not condemn her "unheard" (as he has read the completion), W. E. Henley, in *The Academy* of September 1878, does express the opinion that "the master's last novel, stylistically perhaps his best, was left unfinished, and should be let alone till doomsday" (Henley 1878:290). This suggests a rejection of completions on principle in much the same way as Gadd's later reaction. Whether "doomsday" is taken as the point at which the author would be able to take it up again, or as a statement that it can never be finished, the assertion is founded in the idea that only the author can finish his text. While this conforms to the pattern of reactions that I have already identified, the reference to Dickens' style as being at its best in the fragment is in line with a particular articulation of that resistance to the interference with the

aura of the work which I have remarked on above, and which will form the focus of this section: there is a shift in emphasis from appropriation of style to the authority to plot in reactions to the completions' perceived interference with the aura of Dickens' work between 1878 and 1914. At the time of Henley's review, the focus is on style.

The review of Vase's three volume completion in *The Athenaeum*, in September 1878 states that "the objection most people would make to it is that it is too close an imitation of the style of Dickens" ("New Novels" 1878:399). Henley elaborates on the same point in *The Academy* of the same month:

> Mr.[103] Gillan Vase has done his best to imitate the great artist, but has produced a work that is merely vexatious. It reminds one of a fifth-rate actor's imitation of some particular star in one of his favourite parts. Here are some of the familiar tricks, the inevitable mannerisms, the most personal intonations, the well-known gestures; and the spirit that informed the thing is as though it had never been. . . . Unhappily he knows his Dickens, for he has caught not unsuccessfully the trick of certain of the great writer's affectations. But his knowledge should have assured him that what he was writing was utterly unlike what he was bent on imitating. (Henley 1878:290)

The imitation of Dickens, according to this review, fails because it employs the stylistic traits identifiable as "Dickensian" without the backing of "the spirit that informed the thing". It is not condemned because it fails to mimic the style; on the contrary, the accuracy of the imitation becomes a negative trait: it is "unhappily" not unsuccessful in capturing "the great writer's affectations". This is because the imitation is not infused with the "spirit of Dickens", an undefined quality only explained through the reference to an inferior actor imitating a master's superficial expression. In order to make sense of this image, it is again helpful to see it in the

[103]Early reviewers are not aware that Gillan Vase is a woman and all refer to her as Mr. Vase. Gadd would later speculate that they would have been kinder had they known her gender, and a later reviewer does attribute the writing of the completion to a (presumably excusable) "feminine want of restraint" (Matchett 1913:296-7).

context of Benjamin's exploration of the aura. In his discussion of the difference between the stage actor and the film actor, he writes that, "[t]he aura surrounding Macbeth on the stage cannot be divorced from the aura which, for the living spectators, surrounds the actor who plays him" (Benjamin 2003:260). This aura cannot be replicated by another actor, regardless of his imitation through the use of the movements, intonations and other traits of the performance of the first. The imitation will lack authenticity, which Benjamin sees as dependent on the "uniqueness of the artist [and] his creative achievement" (Benjamin 2003:n12 272). In short, the "spirit of Dickens" as what is missing in Vase's completion, can be identified with the aura of Dickens as author. She may be employing Dickens' phrases, Dickens' characters and Dickensian scenes, but they are not backed by the creative authority of Dickens.

Even more scathing than Henley, the *Examiner*'s review in October of the same year employs the same term. It takes as its starting point Vase's words in her preface[104] and states that,

> A distinguished American medium has, we believe, claimed to have received the only true and authentic conclusion to "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" from the spirit of Charles Dickens himself! Mr. Gillan Vase, it will be observed, does not claim to be the spokesman and slave of the spirit of Dickens, but only of his pen; and this exactly represents his position. He uses, indeed, the self-same pen, and dips it in the self-same ink, and forms his handwriting upon the same model; but if the pen be the pen of Dickens, the hand which holds it and the spirit which guides the hand are those of Mr. Gillan Vase. ("Great Mystery" 1878:1271-2)

The distinction between the "spirit" of Dickens and what is merely the mimicry of style, embodied in "the pen", is reminiscent of Henley, and it is here tied explicitly to the author. Like Henley's fifth-rate actor modelling his performance on the superficial

[104]She explains that she had been unable to turn back in her originally idle writing because, "who ever takes up an author's pen, however thoughtlessly, is very soon not its master but its slave" (Vase 1878c:ii).

expressions, “tricks”, “mannerisms”, “intonations” and “gestures” of the master, Vase according to this image models her writing on Dickens’ penmanship, not his authorship. The “pen” suggests superficial mimicry alone, without the ability to write Dickens’ words as he would have. It lacks the creative authority, founded in the aura, of Dickens’ text. The reviewer contrasts Vase’s completion with that of James (although apparently without having read the latter), suggesting that what is missing from this attempt might be found in “what claims to be the only true and authentic conclusion . . . from the Spirit of Dickens himself”. This explicitly connects what is missing from Vase’s work to what I discussed in my treatment of James’ completion: while the spirit of Dickens from beyond the grave could complete the fragment authentically, Vase cannot. The implication is that mimicry, attempting to create the illusion of Dickens’ style, cannot alone endow Vase’s completion with the authority of a proper completion because it lacks the connection to the author. Quite to the contrary,

> The head and front of Mr. Gillan Vase’s offending is not that he has attempted to continue Dickens to the best of his ability and has failed; but that he has, with a great deal of perverted ingenuity, set seriously to work to mimic Dickens, and, in a lamentable way, may be said to have succeeded. It is the reverse of the old fairy tale when straw was spun to gold. Mr. Vase, indeed, gathered up in his hand the broken threads of the story, but these threads of pure gold have magically and imperceptibly become transformed by his touch into common straw, and the worst of the matter is that it is extremely difficult to realise afterwards that they ever were threads of gold. . . . And the strange, the fatal part of the business is that all this mischief is done without any glaring departure from the style and plan of the original; on the contrary, such constant care and watchfulness has been observed to make the different personages of the story act up to their several characters, they are so laboriously themselves, and insist so upon making us remark that they have lost none of their idiosyncrasies and peculiarities in passing out of the hands of their creator, Charles Dickens, into those of the showman, Mr. Gillan Vase, that our distaste towards them in their last state somehow spreads back to them in their first; and we are afraid that no one who has been

> sufficiently unfortunate to read "A Great Mystery Solved" will ever again be able to revert with the same pleasure to "The Mystery of Edwin Drood". ("Great Mystery" 1878:1272)

While Vase's use of Dickens' style is a strategy aimed at endowing the completion with authority, and Vase's hope that it will not be condemned "unheard" is based in the assumption that the quality of the imitation is central to the effectiveness of its bid for authority, the reviewer laments Vase's attempt to imitate Dickens' style all the more because it "may be said to have succeeded", just as Henley did in the review quoted on page 149. The success of the imitation is not success in terms of providing the completion with the ability to convince its readers of its legitimacy, that is, to endow it with an aura, an authority of its own. The effect, according to this description, is quite the reverse: the adherence to style and plan is the "fatal" aspect of it. As a result of Vase's completion, and its attempt to overcome the distance between itself and the original work of art by appropriating a style recognisable to the reviewer as "Dickensian", the original text becomes tainted. In fact, the reviewer suggests, the completion "might much more appropriately be entitled a great work spoiled" ("Great Mystery" 1878:1272), suggesting that the desecration of the original text is the main effect of the completion. The potential and promise of the fragment, its "golden threads", lose their uniqueness and worth by being turned into "common straw" in Vase's text. And, again, not only does this mean that Vase's text cannot hope to aspire to the value of Dickens' text, the latter is itself transformed by the attempt and ends up losing its value, as the reader who has read the completion cannot anymore read the original in the same way. This is quite an important statement, as it demonstrates and makes explicit that fear which I think is at the heart of the opposition to the

completions: that the destruction, or at any rate interference with, the aura of the work will in turn devalue it as a work of art. Dickens' characters become tainted retroactively by Vase's use of them in her completion, and Dickens' fragment thereby becomes devalued and can no longer be read with the same pleasure by those who have read Vase's completion. Rather than an elevation of Vase's text, the result of her attempt to appropriate the aura of Dickens, is a debasement of Dickens' fragment.

The tainting of Dickens' original text is again seen as being done by appropriation of his "tricks", "mannerisms", "intonations" and "gestures", as Henley put it.[105] It is in this context, too, that its opposition between Charles Dickens as "creator" and Gillan Vase as "showman" becomes clear: Dickens as author and holder of the aura that attaches to authenticity has the authority to create; whereas Vase, who does not have it, is relegated to a position of displaying and presenting what is only an approximate imitation of the authentically "Dickensian". This cannot be reduced to a question of quality, as Vase would seem to hope in her preface: the reviewer states that "the author, if he will consent to drop the pen of Dickens and to take up his own, is capable of producing a very readable novel" ("Great Mystery" 1878:1272), thereby making it clear that the objection is directed primarily at the attempt to write from someone else's position.

This follows the trend in the early reactions to the completions, discussed earlier in this chapter: there is consternation that someone would take it upon

[105]The review in *The Examiner* elaborates on this point by commenting that "[h]onest and eccentric Mr. Grewgious is made to insist so frequently upon his angularity, and to smooth his head with such wearisome persistency, and to deny his susceptibility to anything like sentiment, being so patently open to sentiment all the time, that at length he becomes not only a little like a hypocrite, but even a good deal like a bore" ("Great Mystery" 1878:1272). Like James, then, Vase repeats character traits and modes of expression found in the original in order to provide continuity in the text, but the result of the repetition is to change the import of the first use of it, here turning Grewgious into a less trustworthy and appealing character.

themselves to finish the fragment, and the objection is here directed at the attempt to ground it in Dickens' way of writing in the extant chapters. While the handling of plot is alluded to in the reference to the plan of the work and "the broken threads of the story", as well as in a sarcastic reference in the opening paragraph, which in reference to the title of Vase's completion comments that "[t]he 'Mystery of Edwin Drood' is no longer to be regarded as a mystery" ("Great Mystery" 1878:1272), the main emphasis of the criticism is consistently on the attempt to imitate Dickens' style and characters, and the fear that the completion will retroactively taint Dickens' original work.

While this strategy continues to draw negative attention wherever it is perceived to be exaggerated, however, it is presented as a positive asset in Cuming Walters' review of Crisp's completion in 1914: "[h]e has something of the Dickens style, something of the elusive Dickens quality, something even of Dickens's almost inimitable humour. And although it is not 'the real thing' I feel that it is good imitation" (Walters 1914:238-9). Where Vase's completion 35 years earlier had been met with assertions that the "head and front" of her offence was that she had succeeded in mimicking Dickens, by 1914 Crisp is applauded for providing a "good imitation". It is still lacking in authenticity, being not "the real thing", only an "imitation", but this does not provoke the outrage and ridicule that could be found in the reviews from 1878. This is an indication that something has changed radically in how the completions are approached in the intervening years. Moreover, the same tendency can be found two years earlier; in 1912, *The Bookman* assures its readers that Vase "proceeds to relate Jasper's miserable ending and to draw the chequered love affair of Edwin and Rosa to the right Dickensian conclusion" ("News" 1912:145).

While the explanation for the unusually positive tendency of this review may be that it is provided as an introduction to an interview with the author, it is particularly interesting in that it considers the "Dickensian" appearance of the conclusion as a positive trait, rather than a dishonest ploy, thereby marking a shift from the earlier reviews. What is more, it suggests that the completion is acceptable *because* it follows these conventions.[106] The same tendency can be traced in some of the reactions to Leon Garfield's completion, which will be discussed in the following section. There it is connected to a perception of the imitation as "pastiche", a form of imitation which is open about its derivative nature rather than as a dishonest "forgery".

This lessening of the objections to the appropriation of Dickens' language is simultaneous with a tendency to emphasise liberties of plot to a greater extent. I see this development as a result of the appearance of a sub-culture of "Droodians" within the wider readership of Dickens. This development is tied to the creation of *The Dickensian*, in 1905, as a dedicated forum for the discussion of Dickens. Whereas previously discussion of *Edwin Drood* had been scattered over a wide variety of daily newspapers or weekly, biweekly and monthly magazines, the creation of *The Dickensian* brought with it a focusing of the debates, as one could assume that the people one were writing for had read earlier instalments of the discussion, and consequently an increasing specialisation of the discussion of plot details as clues to the intended ending of Dickens' narrative. Completions are still seen as suspect: Percy T. Carden cites Cuming Walters as having said that "writers of sequels 'have

[106]The "right Dickensian conclusion", here, is one where the good characters arrive at a happy ending, signified by marriage. This is particularly interesting considering what we know about the original ending to *Great Expectations*, which was changed from an unhappy to a "Dickensian" ending after Bulwer Lytton interfered. George Bernhard Shaw insisted on using the original authorial conclusion in his edition of the book from 1937. This highlights the fact that Dickens is not tied by the perception of the "Dickensian", but his completers are.

cut the Gordian knot rather than untied it"' (Carden 1920:xiv), suggesting an element of cheating, or at least of taking short cuts around a problem without respecting the rules. But the criteria for evaluation of the completions change to include a much stronger focus on the plausibility of the solution of the plot. It entails a moving away from the wider field of the authenticity of the style and characters, to include a greater focus on the plot as allowing a tight structuring of the hermeneutic code. The reverence or respect requirement becomes founded in the ability to provide a plausible approximation of Dickens' intended plot.

Despite the lack of outrage in the early reviews regarding plot and plot-developments that are not grounded in Dickens' original text, Vase's completion was heavily modified when a second edition of the completion was published in 1914. The editor, Shirley Byron Jevons, affixed a note prefacing the new edition (which was significantly shortened and published in one volume, unlike the three volume first edition) explaining that Vase's

> luxuriant imagination led her not only to follow up the destinies of the characters which we owe in their inception to Dickens, but also to create several others.
>
> As rather detracting from the value of a sequel in which it seemed desirable that only known Dickensian characters should appear, these new ones have been eliminated. The completion of the original story, the spirit and diction of which are, it is thought, pretty closely imitated, is now offered as an ingenious and probable solution to the mystery". (Jevons 1914:v)

By 1914, then, there is an expressed feeling that Vase has overstepped her bounds, not primarily in interfering with the aura of the text or in a corruption of Dickens' style, but in taking up the freedom to introduce new characters, rather than in mimicking Dickens' style. In fact, the close imitation of Dickens' "spirit and diction" is here, as

it was in Cuming Walters' review of Crisp, held up as an asset. Vase's original liberties of creation, which led to the introduction of characters not in Dickens' original text, is now seen as "rather detracting from the value of the sequel", based in an understanding that this should ideally contain only characters created by Dickens. This reflects the desire for an approximation of the "correct ending", as an ending close to what Dickens might have provided, and its plausibility is founded in the ability to draw only on existing parts of the authorial text. The promise of "an ingenious and probable solution to the mystery", moreover, is tailored to appeal to Droodians, whose search for a solution that will satisfy the desire for consonance while still providing a peripeteic twist has at this time already caused the editor of *The Dickensian* to close its pages to further debate once.

Jevons' strategy backfires, however. The reissuing of the text (however modified) brings it to the attention of a readership which has developed stringent criteria for the evaluation of suggested plots. Matchett, in 1913, writes in *The Dickensian*, in an article dealing with the new edition of Vase's completion (to be published the following year), that

> To say that the gold of Dickens becomes mere tinkling brass in the hands of Gillan Vase is not to overstate the case one jot. Apart from the notion of Drood's survival, of which I will say nothing, her ideas of the working out are terribly ill-conceived. That Sapsea could possibly be believed for a moment to have murdered his wife is to reduce the tale to wild burlesque, while the notion of a disguised Drood becoming Grewgious' clerk is cheap and penny-novelettish to a degree. … In any case we are left with the inference that it was rather a weak thing in Dickens ever to have introduced us to these people. The outstanding fault of this continuation, however, is the fact that the characters are mere wooden puppets smeared with a little colour scraped from the original.
>
> … Gillan Vase's whole handling of the story tends to cheapen and vulgarize it and to rob it of any real interest. Barring that, her writing may be recommended. (Matchett 1913:297)

This employs an image similar to that of the review in the *Examiner* in 1878, quoted above: the gold of Dickens has become transformed into a baser substance. The old objection of superficial mimicry is still present, in that the characters' only colour is what has been stolen from Dickens' and reapplied. As in the early reactions, the image of superficial resemblance to Dickens' writing without the deeper substance to animate it is present, albeit here without any reference to the "spirit of Dickens", merely to the lack of spirit in the characters themselves. While there is discernible continuity, however, and the stylistic failings are described as "the outstanding fault", the main focus of the piece, for which the outrage is reserved, is plotting and consistency, which fall short of the mark. The suggestion that the completion, because of its poor handling of plot, turns out to reflect poorly on Dickens himself echoes the long standing theme of the "tainted" Dickens, only this time it is based in weak plotting rather than primarily a corruption of style. The working out of the plot is "terribly ill-conceived", it is dominated by weak devices, making it alternately "cheap and penny-novelettish" or "wild burlesque". The weak plotting "tends to cheapen and vulgarize it and to rob it of any real interest". The lack of a good resolution of the plot, providing a satisfying originality while justifying the inclusion of the characters of the fragment, is here what devalues Dickens' text.

As the first new completion since 1887, Crisp's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood by Charles Dickens. Completed in 1914 by W. E. C.* accentuates the shift signalled by Jevons' editorial choice. Henry Jackson writes that "[I]t is a bold man who tries to complete in the manner of Dickens what Dickens left unfinished: but 'W. E. C.'s' work has its merits. The imitation is plausible: the style simple and effective: the story

is not too ambitious. Of course, if Dickens had lived, he would have had his surprises for us, but 'W.E.C.' wisely avoids *terra incognita*" (J[ackson] 1914:57). While dubious as to the prudence of writing completions in the "manner of Dickens" in general, Jackson praises Crisp for the plausibility of his completion: the use of Dickens' style is not censured, but more importantly Crisp is praised, not for having managed to recreate Dickens' intended ending, but for not attempting anything so ambitious: this is the clearest articulation yet of the distinction between the creative authority of the author in terms of plot, and the lack of it in the completion-writers. The task of the completion, if it must be written, according to this view, is to organise and build on what is there in Dickens' text, not attempt to take on his creative authority for oneself. The lack of ventures into unknown territory is the main signal of the new focus in the approach to completions: "*terra incognita*" must here be understood as the possible innovations of plot and characters which Dickens as author might have introduced, but which Crisp, lacking that authority, should avoid. He is to stick to the manipulation of the plot threads already discernible in the fragment. However, in doing that he is still subject to the strict evaluation of plot which Droodiana has fostered.

Walters writes that

> a continuation of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood", in order to be justified at all . . . must present a solution of the problem, or perhaps it would be better to say a series of solutions of the different parts of the complex problem, the mechanism of which was only half-disclosed. . . . [S]urely boldness was never exceeded in the case of W. E. C., who, so far from pondering upon the puzzle for years, as most of us have done, "only read the published portion of the story quite lately for the first time," and forthwith rushed to the elucidation. He must therefore have acted intuitively, and not have proceeded by patient argument an analysis. In fact, after reading his preface, we can almost hear him shout "Eureka!". (Walters 1914:238-9)

Walters' concern is the development of the hermeneutic code: the "problem" which requires a solution is the revelation of the enigma in the text, and the "mechanism" which "was only half-disclosed" is the fragment's perceived provision for the construction of the hermeneutic code. The objection to Crisp's completion, here, is his lack of attention to the detailed analysis of Dickens' text which Droodian speculation has produced, in particular since 1905, and which while characterised by heated disagreements has managed to arrive at a tentative agreement regarding certain points of plot. Respect for Dickens' text, and the authority of a completion, has become linked to the attention to the assembly of evidence for one plot outline or another, and Walters considers this inattention to the careful study of the text as the main failing of the completion. This view is supported by Jackson, whose objections follow the same mould:

> 'W. E. C.'s' reconstruction is flagrantly inconsistent with Dickens' fragment and what we know of his intentions. For example, in Dickens' chapter xxi., xxii., Tartar and Rosa fall in love at first sight . . . . 'W. E. C.' is then very bold, when at p. 344 he makes Helena promise Neville Rosa's love. Again, Forster tells us – and Sir Luke Fildes confirms his statement – that the last pages were to have been written in the condemned cell. For this, 'W. E. C.' substitutes an entirely different finale. (J[ackson] 1914:58)

While he applauds Crisp's lack of creative liberties, then, the inattention to the extra-textual evidence collected by Droodians over the last decade or more becomes deeply problematic: the book is now "flagrantly inconsistent" with Dickens' intention, and the authorities of Forster and Luke Fildes (Dickens' illustrator) are cited to condemn it. It is interesting that Forster is held up as an authority for the pattern at this point. As I will show in the following chapter, the rejection of Forster's authority was central to the beginning of Droodian speculation, and no completion before Crisp had even considered Edwin to be dead; but of the following six, three

follow Forster's plot outline and all treat Drood as murdered by his uncle.

As this subchapter has shown, there is a distinct development in the reactions to completions of *Edwin Drood*, from a focus on the aura and the voice of Dickens, to a markedly stronger preoccupation with plot. Vase, in the late 1870s, would seem to have underestimated the strength of the reactions her book would provoke. In 1914, both Crisp and the editor of the second edition of Vase's completion are much more cautious, taking care to minimise the offence by showing awareness of their own lack of authority. In the same period, the concern has become primarily one of plotting: the new characters are excised from Vase, and Crisp stays away from "*terra incognita*". In 1914, moreover, reviews of both completions focus on their ability to manipulate the plot. There are strong indications that Droodian speculations, which will be discussed in greater detail in my final chapter, have changed the focus of what is seen as integral to *Edwin Drood*, and what a completer must do to provide satisfaction and avoid offence. Both traditions remain alive, however. This problem of the puzzle, and the working out of and grounding the ending in a justification which draws on Dickens' text, is central to one development of the Droodian completions. In the following sub-chapter I will discuss the difference between two approaches to Droodian completions (the one that shows explicitly its awareness of the Dickensian text and the one that attempts to convey the illusion of Dickens' completion).

4.3 Two very different approaches (1980)

Out of six completions following Crisp's, the influence of Forster's outline of the plot is especially noticeable in three: Edwin Harris' *John Jasper's Gatehouse* (1931),

Charles Forsyte's *The Decoding of Edwin Drood* (1980) and Leon Garfield's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood, concluded by Leon Garfield* (1980).[107] Edwin Harris' completion simply cites Forster's plot outline in his preface as justification for his choice of plot. The acceptance of the authority of Forster which this indicates (the lack of which, as I will show in the following chapter, is a significant part of the origin of Droodiana as a phenomenon) is apparent in the development of completions from 1914 onward. The writers thereby find themselves in something approaching the situation of Arthur Quiller-Couch when he completed *St. Ives*: they consider themselves to have second-hand access to an authorial plan which provides a rough outline of the plot, even if some of the details are lacking. The plot can therefore, to an extent, be presented as authoritative.

As the year of the first publication of new completions since 1952 (if we disregard the school text and the film completion, since 1931), 1980 presents a whole new generation of the reading public with a newly published completion of Dickens' text, more than a hundred years after Morford, James and Vase. 1980 also provides the first opportunity since 1914 to consider two completions published in the same year: Leon Garfield's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood, concluded by Leon Garfield* and

[107]Of the other three, two are determined in part by their goals: Michael West's completion is part of a school text, which reproduces Dickens' text in simplified form and presents a spelling error as its key to the solution; Ruth Alexander's is a writing out of the film adaptation, and the difference in medium can account to some extent for its choice to have Jasper fall off the cathedral tower rather than recount his exploits in the condemned's cell. The third completion, that of "A Loyal Dickensian" bizarrely states that "John Forster, who had been his close friend almost from the outset of his career and to whom every book was submitted for criticism before it was issued, had been told nothing. Nor could Sir Luke Fildes, who had illustrated the story, throw very much light on the question" (Dickensian 1927:3). The writer does note that Fildes "had been commissioned to design an illustration shewing Jasper in the condemned cell. Whether or no Dickens afterwards changed his plans … can never be known" (Dickensian 1927:259). They acknowledge, however, that "it will be brought up against me that at any rate I ought to have got Jasper into the condemned cell, but it would have taken another chapter to do so and artistically nothing could be gained by allowing him to explain, hence it was better to be rid of him[.] … The melodrama is something anybody could write, but Dickens was alone competent to put in 'Dickens' touches" (Dickensian 1927:262).

Charles Forsyte's *The Decoding of Edwin Drood*.[108] These completions are both written by already established authors: Garfield wrote a series of historical fiction books for children, and won the Carnegie Medal in 1970 together with Edward Blishen; Forsyte had published a number of mystery books in the 1960s. While the two completions provide revelations of similar enigmas (not only do they both follow Forster's plot outline, but Jasper is suffering from a split personality in both), their respective backgrounds and the titles of their completions give some indication of the difference in their approaches: Garfield's work continues in an imitation of Dickens' style, seamlessly following on from where Dickens left off;[109] Forsyte, conversely, attempts to *decode* the fragment through analysis, setting up a hermeneutic, critical authority as the foundation for his completion. Where Garfield's completion is primarily an imitation of Dickens' style, mimicking his language and developing "Dickensian" characters, Forsyte's belongs to a tradition of completions which are much more closely affiliated with speculations, setting out to solve the mystery and complete the plot in a plausible fashion.

In his introduction to Garfield's work, Edward Blishen writes that,

> Perhaps never more than in *Edwin Drood* did Dickens demonstrate that when it comes to great writing, narrative and voice are inextricable. Here is narrative at its most carefully organised: here is the voice at its most splendid . . .
>
> Anyone who is to convince us that he is, with any sort of plausibility, completing *Edwin Drood* must give us this sensation to which Dickens has accustomed us, of being, as it were, adventurously safe in his storyteller's hands. (Blishen 1980:xiii)

[108]Charles Forsyte is a pseudonym referring to Gordon Philo and his wife (variously given as Mavis Philo or Vicky Galsworthy), who wrote a number of mystery books under that name in the 1960s.

[109]All earlier completions (with the exception of the "Spirit Pen" completion) that print Dickens' text as part of the book provide some signal of the transition: Crisp provides a string of asterisks at the end of Dickens' text and "NEW TEXT" printed in brackets at the beginning of his own; and "A Loyal Dickensian", likewise gives the asterisks to mark the transition. Garfield does not.

Based on Blishen's words it would seem that "[c]ompleting *Edwin Drood*" is not a matter of simply writing a sequel or continuing the narrative. Because a writer must "convince us", the "completing" must here entail a measure of success in *finishing* the narrative as it should be finished, in providing narrative closure. And the safety which Blishen considers necessary to the success of the venture is recognisable as the "confidence of the end" of Kermode: the text must convince us to suspend our own provisional readings and be willing to revise them in view of additional information. Like Vase's preface of 1887, Blishen here does not recognise any objections to completions which would make them problematic in principle. His claim is that the "confidence of the end", the reader's willingness to subsume his provisional understanding of the plot to the new information of Garfield's completion, can be provided by a skilful manipulation of plot and a control of the voice recognisable to the reader as Dickensian. The creative authority is not claimed as his own by Garfield, however: it depends on an illusion of Dickens, which in turn is created by imitation of his voice and a manipulation of plot and characters that can usually be based in the text as it stands. Garfield's manipulation of plot follows Forster's outline quite faithfully: with the exception of the details of Neville's fate, the main innovation is the introduction of the idea of Jasper as suffering from a split personality, which is itself based on an interpretation of Forster's description of Jasper telling the story of his crime as if it were told of another.

As with Vase, the sense of the adherence to Dickens being *overdone* is raised as an objection to the completion, particularly in reference to style. Katherine M. Longley, in her review of the two continuations for *The Dickensian*, writes that,

> At first Mr Garfield's narrative does give us this sensation [of being

> adventurously safe in his storyteller's hands], though his style is a trifle over-mannered. He is very, very clever, and holds us enthralled. But his plethora of quotations from, and references to, Shakespeare … begins to destroy any illusion that his is another work from 'the dear dead hand'. … We can now see that this work, whatever the writer's original intention, has become a burlesque, in fact, a spoof, often hilarious, sometimes in outrageously bad taste. (Longley 1981:102)

Longley's words make it clear that the acceptance of the completion is based in the illusion that one is reading Dickens: the sensation of narrative safety is only disturbed as the illusion falls apart. What she picks up on is precisely the same problem as that noted in relation to James and Vase earlier in this chapter: Garfield has identified a trait, in this case allusions to Shakespeare (Dickens' fragment draws on *Macbeth*, especially), but by overusing it in an attempt to create continuity he ruins the effect.[110] Her observation that the completion comes to resemble a "burlesque" or a "spoof", that is, a parody, is perhaps the most important observation in the quotation. It touches on the core problem of completions: because they find it necessary to write in something approaching Dickens' style, completion-writers cannot escape creating that doubleness of expression which is related to the ironic gap used in parody. If the illusion falters, then, the impression becomes one of accentuated distance rather than authenticity.

[110]At least six of Garfield's new chapters have headings which allude to (or directly quote) Shakespeare: "Excursions and Alarms", "In Thunder, Lightening and in Rain", "The Play's the Thing!", "Enter a Porter", "When the Hurlyburly's Done" and "When the Battle's Lost and Won". Within the main body of the text he also has Datchery, here a retired actor, quote Shakespeare from time to time (e.g. "Murder most foul, as in the best it is!" (Garfield and Dickens 1980:272) and "Ah, the key! There's the rub" (Garfield and Dickens 1980:272). Hamlet is explicitly mentioned, and the uncle/nephew dynamic of that play is compared to their present situation by characters. In comparison only one of Dickens' original chapter titles provides a direct quote of this kind (chapter 14: "When Shall These Three Meet Again?"), although a few of the others could be seen as more oblique references to Shakespeare (i.e. "Nun's House" and "Daggers Drawn"). In addition Dickens' text does draw on, and refer directly to, *Macbeth*, for example in the waiter whose leg is "always lingering after he and the tray had disappeared, like Macbeth's leg when accompanying him off the stage with reluctance to the assassination of Duncan" (Dickens 1982:91); or in the description of Mrs Crisparkle's medicine closet, where her confidence ofit is contrasted with the hopelessness of Lady Macbeth (Dickens 1982:79).

This may be why Brigid Brophy, in a review of Garfield's completion for the *London Review of Books* argues that "[t]he boldest way to supply the missing second half of *Edwin Drood* would be in the idiom of the present time" (Brophy 1980:9). Her description of the completion is one of "an honourable and, where style is concerned, mainly plausible fake", the narrative (if not the dialogue) of which is "a forgery good enough, I should guess, to deceive" (Brophy 1980:9): but "he is under the great, restricting disability of the faker: he cannot do anything unDickensian. Dickens, of course, could and well might have done, it being his privilege that, the moment he did it, it would *become* Dickensian" (Brophy 1980:9). Her argument is based in the view that the attempt to counterfeit the authorial creative authority of Dickens, particularly as regards style, is a blind alley, as it will remain a "fake" and a "forgery", and the writer a "faker". It does not endow the writer with the authority of Dickens as author. Dickens was free to change his style, because as an author he is a unifying principle used to organise texts and determine precisely what is understood by the term "Dickensian". Garfield does not have this power over texts begun by another author: while he can mimic Dickens, he cannot step outside the limits of the style already set. He cannot create independently and retain the illusion of Dickensian style.

The solution to the problem of authenticity, which has been at the heart of the objections to Droodian completions, is according to Brophy not to attempt to appropriate the aura of Dickens by emulating his style, repeating his phrases or including iconic scenes from his books: these all leave the completion-writer with the appearance of a counterfeiter (at worst) or a parodist (at best). Rather, the solution is to write from one's own position: she concludes that "[a] satisfying completion of

Drood will have to await a writer who can match Dickens's confidence by a confidence on his own part of having understood not just Dickens's style but Dickens's mind. The use of modern language might help, by forcing the writer to decide what he thinks structural and what decorative in Dickens's text" (Brophy 1980:9). Brophy, here, takes up again the opposition between surface style and something integral to Dickens, which has been part of the reviews since the beginning. The concept opposed to surface style is no longer the "spirit", however, but the "mind" of Dickens. The difference is potentially significant. Dickens' spirit cannot be replicated. Dickens' mind, if it could be "understood" would give access to "the structural" side of the narrative, however. Imitation is rejected because it is only the surface, not the deeper essence of the work: her rejection of imitation only refers to this surface expression; the structure of the work, the plot, could be recreated and provide a "satisfactory completion". Brophy, in this review, represents a development of a tendency I traced in the previous sub-chapter, in that she focuses exclusively on the structure of the novel and its development of plot. The ability to provide satisfaction, as she sees it, lies in the authority of the author (it is dependent on access to the authorial mind), but it is potentially recoverable. This optimism is at the heart of the Droodian speculation, as I will show in the next chapter. As is the apparent assumption that the correct plot, once found, should be recognisable as such for all.

Among reviewers, however, Brophy's rejection of style is extreme. The imitation of Dickens' style is in the majority of the reviews of Garfield evaluated as a point of skill: this is done by separating the evaluation of the imitation, as "pastiche", from the question of authenticity, thereby making it possible to consider it as "good"

or “bad” pastiche without having to condemn it as a usurpation of Dickens’ voice or as a forgery. “Pastiche” lacks the negative connotations of Brophy’s “forgery” and “fake”, in that it suggests that the imitation is open about its status as imitation, that there is no intention to deceive. In his investigation of pastiche Richard Dyer defines it as “a kind of imitation that you are meant to know is an imitation” (Dyer 2007:1). He distinguishes it from “fake, forgery and hoax”, which refer to situations where “you pass off your own work as someone else’s” (Dyer 2007:28). Garfield never claims to have unearthed a lost Dickens manuscript, and his name appears on the title page along with Dickens’. Brophy’s objection may therefore appear to be unfair. However, it makes sense when seen in light of Blishen’s description of a completion’s aims: to make the reader feel “safe in [the] storyteller’s hands” (Blishen 1980:xiii, discussed on page 164). If the completion is perceived as aiming to gloss over the fact that the writer is not Dickens, and make the reader forget it in a suspension of disbelief with regard to the author’s identity, then Brophy’s terms could apply. Her attitude echoes that of the reactions to the early completions, and the images of robbery and dishonest appropriation that they used.

Even in Brophy, there is no indication of that sense of a violation of sanctity which the reviews at the turn of the century expressed, however. And the majority of her contemporaries do not use language which suggests unrightful appropriation. C. J. E. Ball, in *British Book News*, calls Garfield’s completion “a fine pastiche of the mature Dickens style” (Ball 1980:757). Angus Wilson, in *The New York Times*, writes that “the audacity in presenting his version of the last half of the novel in a pastiche of Dickens, following on directly from the authentic text of the first half, pays off

wonderfully" (Wilson 1981:20). Again, "audacity" recalls Vase's description of her own completion as "audacious". At the time, as I showed on page 147, her use of the positive connotations of the word were countered by one reviewer who drew on its negative potential; in 1980, the "audacity" is not censured, it is considered daring, but successful. This is indicative of a shift in the perception of a continuator's legitimacy, but a shift does not entail a complete rejection of the primacy of Dickens: Garfield's text is opposed to "the authentic first half" and, by inference, is not itself "authentic" in the way Dickens' is. The success of the venture is not necessarily hindered by it, however. Paul Bailey's review for *The Guardian* is titled "No Darker Purpose. Paul Bailey reviews a pastiche", and the body of the review states that

> This is excellent pastiche. Whenever Leon Garfield allows himself to deviate from the plot, he is splendidly entertaining. He cannot, alas, cope with the depths, with what one can only assume was Dickens's darker purpose. No amount of apt allusions to Shakespeare (a trick of the Inimitable's that Garfield has cleverly seized on) can make up for the demoniacal imagination of the great man himself. (Bailey 1980:8)

The "pastiche" label remains positively charged in all these. Bailey suggests that it is when he limits himself to pure pastiche that Garfield is at his most acceptable. While, seen solely as an imitation of Dickens' style, Garfield has succeeded, however, he is unable to produce "the depths" or "the demoniacal imagination of the great man himself". His talent for surface imitation, while in itself entertaining, is no replacement for what Dickens would have produced had he lived (the use of the epiteth "Inimitable" is telling: full imitation (a replication) cannot be hoped for). This again recalls the opposition, by now familiar, of surface imitation and the deeper spirit of Dickens himself, but it should be noted that the negative descriptions of the stylistic imitation are all but absent, unlike in the response to earlier completions.

Similarly, J. I. M. Stewart does not use the term "pastiche", but declares that while Garfield lacks "the full Dickensian exuberance and abundance" (Stewart 1980:1087), his prose is "alive in the right way", and he has "caught the trick of bizarre simile and analogy" (Stewart 1980:1087). There is still a distinction between the "trick" of Dickens and all that Dickens was, but there is no talk of wooden puppets and stolen colour, as we saw in response to Vase. On the contrary, Garfield's writing is described as "alive". There is no sense that Garfield is being original. The praise is all centred on his ability to mimic Dickens' idiosyncracies. This may seem an obvious point, but it makes clear that it is understood that Garfield is not writing from his own position. The reference to "the trick", which was also present in Bailey, can again be found in Sylvère Monod's description of Garfield as "remarkably permeated by his collaborator's tricks and manners" (Monod 1980b:15). Monod's snide reference to Dickens as Garfield's "collaborator" is established earlier in his review, as he ironises over the presumption of placing both names on the title page. This all suggests that Garfield's imitation is acceptable as long as he knows his place, and shows that he knows it: as subordinate to and derivative of Dickens.

Garfield is by several reviewers accorded the right (or even duty), however, to create new characters in Dickens' manner. John Carey states that

> Virginia Woolf said that Dickens kept his novels going by throwing handfuls of fresh characters on the blaze. This means that, in writing a sequel to 'Drood', you have to invent new Dickensian people, as well as hitting off the style. Mr Garfield manages both pretty well, and one of his new people – Mrs Chopper, who lectures on the Primitive Soul and takes a shifty-looking Red Indian around with her as an exhibit – would have delighted Dickens had he thought of her. (Carey 1980:43)

This would seem to be in direct opposition to the indications in reviews of earlier

completions that the creative authority remains with the author. Mrs Chopper is frequently mentioned in reviews, and always in a positive manner. She is treated in marked contrast to the laments of "ticketed marionettes" and "puppets" which met earlier character innovations. However, it is significant that Mrs Chopper has no bearing on the resolution of the plot. She functions in much the same way as the "Dickensian" language, the "tricks and manners" which makes the completion recognisable as pastiche. She is there purely as a homage to the Dickensian character. And she is treated as an extension of the pastiche by reviewers who are already favourably disposed to that aspect of Garfield's completion. In much the same vein as Carey, Bailey declares that

> Dickens's genius feeds on the accidental: the great novels teem with inspired afterthoughts; with characters who have little to do with life. The conscientious Drood-completer has to keep this in mind. Leon Garfield has done so.
>
> The best scene he has come up with in his concluding chapter is one of delightful irrelevance, involving a lady named Mrs Chopper[.] (Bailey 1980:8).

Monod praises her as a "superbly Dickensian character" (Monod 1980b:15), and Ball calls her "bogus and delightful" (Ball 1980:757). The acceptance of the legitimacy of the completion as pastiche extends to the creation of a particular type of character, designated as "Dickensian".[111] In fact, it requires it as a necessary component of the pastiche. Key to the acceptance of this character, however, is her "delightful irrelevance". This mimics the "accidental", "inspired afterthoughts", not the plot.

It should be stressed that despite the praise for the invention of Mrs Chopper as a character, Garfield is not free to do as he pleases. She is only acceptable because

[111]Mrs Chopper is a satirical jab at the type of person who eulogises the noble savage at the expense of civilisation. Garfield's other new character, a Mrs MacSiddons, is an overly suspicious landlady who, because of extensive experience with theatre people finds all claims to emotion and grand gestures rather unconvincing, including her husband's death.

she mimics a certain type of character, characterised by its "irrelevance" and its "accidental" nature. When it comes to plotting he does not possess creative authority. This becomes apparent with a closer exploration of the treatment of Garfield's plotting. Stewart does accord him the courtesy of not revealing his solution: "Dickens himself went out of his way to preserve its secret until the last part should have appeared. So any solution, even by another hand, should not be given away" (Stewart 1980:1087). This would suggest that the completion is "spoilable", that it has the ability to provide the satisfaction of *anagnorisis* that I earlier assigned to the author's text alone.[112] However, the "even" suggests that this is primarily founded in a vestige of the respect for Dickens. Earlier in the review, moreover, Stewart has set out a series of "obligatory conditions" which anyone "aiming at colourably continuing and concluding the story" must fulfil (Stewart 1980:1087): Jasper must kill Edwin, the twins must impersonate each other, and the Datchery enigma must be solved, along with some account of the "curious and new idea" that Forster mentioned (Stewart 1980:1087). There are strict limitations on the creative liberty Garfield is accorded because his task, as far as possible, is to present a plausible plot which will provide satisfaction based in clues recognisable from Dickens' text.

Demonstrating the same rejection of the completion-writer's ability to authoritatively close off the plot as I discussed in the analysis of the diverging reactions to the Spiritualist completion, Carey writes that "Mr Garfield wisely rejects the theory, favoured by many Droodians . . . that Jasper belongs to the Thugs . . . . On the other hand, Mr Garfield is probably wrong to ignore the hints that Jasper

[112] A "spoiler", after all, is a premature revelation which lessens the impact of the moment of *anagnorsis*.

possesses mesmeric or other paranormal powers" (Carey 1980:43). The reviewer evaluates the choices made by the author based on his own provisional understanding of the plot. In this sense, then, the restrictions on completions remain very similar to what they were in 1914. The explicit reference to speculations (the Thug theory proposed by Duffield and the mesmerism theory proposed by Aubrey Boyd and others, respectively), moreover, emphasises their influence on the more general reception of *Edwin Drood*. Monod goes further and writes that Garfield has

> created surprises which are well managed but result from his taking unwarranted liberties, on more than one occasion, with his materials. . . . [H]is identification of Datchery as a detective in the employment of Mr Grewgious holds neither more nor less water than previous guesses and inventions; the water it holds is simply more gratuitous, and the revelation that this man is an old friend of Miss Twinkleton's, and even that he may marry her at the end, is hard to take and even harder to enjoy. (Monod 1980b:15)

Garfield's plotting, and his manipulation of the already existing characters, is here considered unacceptable. The suggestion that Datchery and Miss Twinkleton might end up together is "hard to take and even harder to enjoy". He takes "unwarranted liberties" on the one hand, and fails to solve the enigmas of the text on the other. The reference to the "gratuitous" nature of the developments contrasts it with the painstaking analyses and arguments provided by those who attempt to back up their understanding of how the plot would work. The word suggests something unearned. As such it is reminiscent of Cuming Walters' comment in 1920, that completion-writers have simply cut the Gordian knot (see page 156).

Monod, moreover, explicitly discusses the completion's inability to successfully close off the narrative:

> The dust-jacket's claim that Garfield's book 'puts an end to [the] torments' we experience as frustrated readers of an unfinished thriller is a

> wild exaggeration. The book does nothing of the kind. It gives pleasure in various ways, but does not dispel any of the doubts and uncertainties about what would have been the real ending of *Edwin Drood* if Dickens had lived for another six months. (Monod 1980b:15)

The claim to successfully close off the narrative and "put an end to the torments" sets out to ignore the function of the author as the only one who can provide the authoritative ending. As I discussed in my first chapter, the "torment" of the "frustrated readers" is due to a desire for the *anagnorisis* of the end, which relies on the confidence in the authority of the author to provide the "right" ending. Monod explicitly rejects Garfield's claim to that authority: it is "a wild exaggeration" and "does nothing of the kind". The "doubts and uncertainties" generated through the operations of the hermeneutic code cannot be dispelled because Garfield cannot take on that authority to pronounce an ending on his own; nor does he make any attempt at showing that this would have been the ending had Dickens lived.

Charles Forsyte's completion has a very different approach than Garfield's. While published earlier in the year, it did not prompt as many reviews, perhaps because it so clearly establishes itself as part of the tradition of Droodian speculation. Unlike Garfield, Forsyte does not publish the new text as a direct continuation of Dickens' *Edwin Drood*. In fact, Dickens' text is not printed in Forsyte's volume at all. The focus, instead, is on justifying the solution presented as a plausible approximation to the intention of Dickens as regards plot. Forsyte writes in the preface that

> [a] credible solution to Dickens's unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* should, I believe, meet two requirements. First, it should rest on a reasoned case. Part One of the book that follows is my personal attempt at detective work on Dickens's intentions, with my deductions. Secondly, a solution should be capable of presentation in fictional form that will provide a satisfactory ending for the reader. This I have tried to do in Part Two. (Forsyte 1980)

This is rather different from Blishen's conditions for a "completion", which stressed "voice" to a greater extent. Forsyte's requirements are all plot-focused. The first half of his[113] book, 106 pages, sets out to reason its way to Dickens' intention through a close analysis of the text Dickens left behind, as well as a number of other sources connected to Dickens. In other words, Forsyte's first half is a speculation, like the ones I will discuss in my next chapter. The second half is closer to Garfield's type of completion, although without the overtly Dickensian style. The aim here, as Forsyte makes clear, is not the illusion of Dickens, but the "satisfactory ending for the reader". Forsyte's completion does not attempt to recreate the illusion of a "Dickensian" text, but to resolve Dickens' plot in a way which will give the reader the experience of *anagnorisis* discussed in my first chapter.

The Decoding of Edwin Drood, then, keeps the imitations of Dickens' playfulness in descriptions to a minimum, focusing instead on the working out of the plot. He writes, "I did not try to imitate the Inimitable, but rather to find a style that would be acceptable to readers today and at the same time follow on the original narrative as smoothly as possible" (Forsyte 1980:106). This completion, unlike Garfield's, aims at a style that is as unobtrusive as possible, one that will serve without distracting too much from the plot. Dickens' epithet of "Inimitable" is used to suggest the futility of the alternative course. It also implies the incongruousness of writing like Dickens today, showing an awareness of the potential parodic gap which confronted Garfield. Dickens, in 1870, could write like that, but someone doing it now would draw untoward attention to the style itself, and away from the plot. Here, Forsyte is in

[113]The pseudonym covers a writing team of one man and one woman, but in order to avoid confusion (as most reviewers use the masculine pronoun), I will accept the fiction of the pseudonym and refer to them as "he".

agreement with Brophy's claim that the structure, the plot of the planned novel, is the central point, while the Dickensian style is a surface feature which merely serves to distract. Monod, the only one to review Forsyte separately before the publication of Garfield's completion, calls this a "praiseworthy intention", but notes that it "has not been rigorously adhered to", and that "[a] continuation of *Edwin Drood* irresistibly turns at times into a sort of parody or pastiche of Dickens" (Monod 1980a:30). Because he is forced to work with Dickens' characters, in what he has constructed to be a Dickensian plot, Forsyte's completion still cannot escape the parody charge.

However, the main focus of Forsyte's completion, reflected in the balance of the reviews, is on the first half of the book. "Part One" gives a very detailed working out of the history of the problem and the basis for Forsyte's own conclusions. He bases his conclusion in an at times very close analysis of the text and Dickens' notes and memoranda, and develops a theory of double personality based on a theme of doubleness in the text (Cf. Forsyte 1980:82-92). In particular it features a very close reading of the description of Mrs Crisparkle's closets, which he claims function first as an image of Jasper's split mind, and then as a miniature summary of the plot.[114] The conclusion of his analysis is that Jasper is suffering from a split personality (Jasper and the Murderer), and that the climax of the prison cell will see Jasper recounting the murder ("as if told of another"), and committing suicide (the uncle killing his nephew's murderer). He thereby claims to have "decoded Dickens's 'very curious and new idea'[115]; but I make no claim that the evolution of the story and all

[114]Forsyte writes that "The two closet paragraphs, read together, seem to encapsulate the story of Edwin Drood. The dining-room closet presents an image of Jasper, his two distinct and separate halves, one apparently normal, the other sinister. The herb-closet adumbrates the events that will follow from this division: his crime, conviction, imprisonment, and the suicide in his cell by which the one half finally exacts retribution on his murderous alter ego" (Forsyte 1980:99).

[115]Forsyte is quoting Forster, who in turn is quoting a letter from Dickens: "I laid aside the fancy I

the details of the solution are as the author himself would have developed them" (Forsyte 1980:106). The claim to authority is here double: it is primarily founded in the analysis of Dickens' text (a "decoding"), but the conclusion of this analysis is backed up with reference to Dickens' own description of the book (mediated by Forster). Forsyte, like Garfield, considers Forster a reliable source, and the "decoding" therefore becomes in part an attempt to decode his information in order to find out what what they believe to be Dickens' words could mean. In fact, the main focus of the book is centered on the question of the "curious and new idea".

The secondary aim of Forsyte's completion was to provide a "satisfactory ending for the reader". In setting out to do this, it is confronted by the problem of the enigmas of the hermeneutic code: Forsyte writes that

> Writing this book has posed a dilemma. I wanted to explain the reasons for my solution, yet I did not want to undermine the interest in my ending by revealing all its details in advance. So, in Part One, I concentrated on the central problem of *Edwin Drood*, that of John Jasper, and largely ignored the secondary problems of the story, in particular the role of Helena Landless and the identity of Datchery. (Forsyte 1980:219).[116]

Keeping these enigmas back allows a revelation, even if the curious idea has been explained. Presenting the reasoning for the revelation of all the enigmas in the first part of the book would "undermine the ending", that is to say, preclude the experience of *anagnorisis*. The enigmas identified by Forsyte are central to the tradition of Droodian speculation I will turn to in my next chapter. Stewart pointed to the same when he, in his review of Garfield, stated that anyone setting out to complete the text must have Jasper kill Drood, find out a curious strange idea, find a use for the twins

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told you of, and have a very curious and new idea for my new story. Not a communicable idea (or the interest of the book would be gone), but a very strong one, though difficult to work" (Forster 1874:425). The full quote can be found on page 103.

[116]Helena, in Forsyte, will enact the role of Drood's ghost; Datchery is Bazzard.

and present the identity of Datchery (Stewart 1980).

This use of critical and analytical methods to anchor a completion in the plausible intention of the author is a strategy which emphasises Forsyte's own lack of authority, thereby warding off the perception that he is usurping the author's. As such, it functions in much the same way as Crisp's abject apology; but it simultaneously endows itself with an authority borrowed from Dickens, dependent on the strength of the interpretation of the clues he left behind.[117] By laying bare its reasons for approaching the problem from a particular direction, Forsyte ensures that while his conclusions may be questioned, he cannot be accused of attempting to usurp the author's creative authority.

However, as I pointed out in my first chapter, the text, in addition to the true clues of the hermeneutic code, will inevitably also include false clues and filler information. The task of constructing the ending based on the first half of the novel, therefore, cannot be achieved with any real authority. To the contrary, the detective novel in particular depends on the reader's possibility of arriving at the wrong conclusion, so that they can then be surprised by the true solution revealed at the end. Dickens' story, if a detective story at all, is a detective story which carries with it the traits of the Victorian novel. As such, it does not present the mystery alone, but a mystery wrapped in a combination of satire, realist writing and romance. The result is a text, the filler component (in terms of the hermeneutic code) of which is likely to be greater than in a formal detective story. Forsyte is not unaware of this. On the contrary, he acknowledges that the richness of the text makes it impossible to point to

[117]Forsyte's status as the author of mystery stories may here present him with another type of authority: that of the puzzle-creator setting out to solve a puzzle. This is not the same type of authority as that bestowed by the author-function, however.

one unequivocal solution: “The real problem lies in the richness of the text of *Edwin Drood*, which cannot be conveyed in a summary. Much is hinted, much is left unsaid, and it is possible to see many different patterns” (Forsyte 1980:24). Because of this richness of the text, then, the task of recreating the plot with any real certainty is impossible, and the completer’s task is to choose between the “different patterns”.

Longley acknowledges this when she writes that, “Charles Forsyte’s ‘ending’ is preceded by a brilliant and stimulating ‘personal investigation’ of the mystery” (Longley 1981:102-3), and later that “[t]he most important contribution Forsyte has to make to *Drood* studies lies in his close examination and interpretation of the rich tapestry of the text. Yet his ‘ending’, like Garfield’s, necessarily ignores many intriguing hints” (Longley 1981:104-5). Longley, here, while very positive to the quality of Forsyte’s research, does not consider his completion conclusive. The selective treatment of the “richness of the text” leads her to see the ending as falling short. The same point is made by Monod, who writes that Forsyte’s idea of Jasper’s split personality, “is ingenious and it is supported by a number of striking arguments” (Monod 1980a:29); but “his theory is far from watertight, and thus, I grieve to say, far from definitive; I mean that it does not preclude the appearance of other continuations in the future” (Monod 1980a:30), and “it may not convince many readers that they now at long last know how Dickens would have completed *Edwin Drood*” (Monod 1980a:30). In other words, neither Forsyte’s research nor his completion are enough to close off the debates and put an end to what Monod in his review of Garfield described as “the torments we experience as frustrated readers” (Monod 1980b:15). His grief at the thought of future Droodian completions, moreover, shows that the

feeling that they are on the whole problematic remains despite the changes in the perception of the aura of the work, which I have traced in this chapter.

4.4 Conclusion

Foucault argued that the author is a function of discourse which is used, in part, to unify texts and close them off from other texts that are not attributed to the same author. When faced with complete novels, this is something we make use of automatically, and they appear as "natural" wholes. The unfinished narrative, and the attempts to complete it, casts this function in high relief: it shows its operation in readers' search for a satisfactory ending, which requires the sanction of the authority of the author. By analysing the reactions to a variety of completions to Dickens' unfinished novel, this chapter has shown how the belief in the completion's connection to the author fundamentally alters how the completion is perceived. In the analysis of the Spiritualist completion in particular, it has shown that the reader's willingness to suspend their own provisional understandings of the plot depends on the perception of the writer as Dickens. In the early reviews this even seems to have affected the aesthetic judgement of the writing. The later article by Arthur Conan Doyle, meanwhile, shows that even when the plot and style of the completion is rejected as aesthetically appealing, its connection to the spirit of the author remains significant.

Moreover, this chapter has shown how the author-function is historically constructed, although with strong continuities over time. This has been done in two ways: first by an analysis of the changes made to the Vase completion over time,

second by two sets of comparisons of completions published in the same year and the reactions they provoke: two in 1914 and two in 1980. The strategies employed by these completions in order to make up for their lack of authorial authority, and the reactions to these strategies, show that the perception of the "aura" of *Edwin Drood*, and its connection to the author, is changing. My analysis also suggests that the nature of this change may be related to the development of Droodian speculations and their focus on plot: they move from a sense of violation following the appropriation of Dickens' voice in the early years, to a stronger focus on the satisfactory ending of the plot in the later. The completions interact with the wider field of Droodian speculation.

This development is not simple and uncontested. Already in the reviews of the earliest completions there is a rejection of their ability to successfully close off the plot; and in reaction to the very latest completions, Garfield was censured for his "fakery", and Forsyte praised for his intention to avoid imitation of style. Still, the main emphasis of reviews has changed over time. While the author still remains the principle of unity which guarantees the "correct" ending, and one might still profitably use Benjamin's term "aura" to describe the sense of particularity of a particular author's creation, the connotations of sacrality have become entirely absent in newer reviews, even when the completion is seen as unacceptable.

5 Droodian Speculation

> [*Edwin Drood*] is, after all, not such a fragment as it looks. In itself it is really complete. If it pauses in mid-story, it is exactly at the point where the stop, if inevitable, could best occur. Speculation may weary itself with conjectures as to how the Mystery was to be unravelled; incipient novelists may lawfully try their mettle at developing it, if they only commit the results of their labour to the flames when they have done; the public will be at once sad and satisfied to take the story of 'Edwin Drood' as it is, – grateful to the author and his memory for what he achieved, and with implicit faith in him as to what he intended. ("Literature" 1870:362)

The *Athenaeum*'s review of the final instalment of *Edwin Drood*, in September 1870, may, in view of the later history of obsessive debate that this text inspired, seem surprising in its claims that the text is "not such a fragment as it looks". Here, the immediate reaction to the unfinished text is one of acceptance of the text as it stands, helped by an impression of the fragment as "not such a fragment as it looks", the end of Dickens' text making it "in itself really complete" and pausing "exactly at the point where the stop, if inevitable, could best occur". This perception of the narrative's completeness, while unusual, can be read as an expression of how the author-function confers wholeness on writing, as I discussed in my last chapter. If the function of the author is to confer wholeness on, and sanction meaning in, the text, it is here not the internal requirements of plot that make the text "really complete" according to this reader: it is the fact that this is all Dickens lived to write. Dickens as author is the unifying factor, leading here to a perception of the text as complete in itself because the final end to it has been provided with Dickens' death.[118] Another expression of

[118]This reviewer is not alone in this perception. In his "Who Cares Who Killed Edwin Drood?, or on the Whole I'd Rather Be in Philadelphia" (1996) Gerhard Joseph claims that

> the novel came to a satisfactory close with what we now have in chapter 22: there is not, nor need there be, any more. Whatever Dickens's intention may have been had he lived to write further, the fact that the last extant chapter of Drood is the last thing in both his art and his life encourages us not merely to speculate about what might have come textually

this sense of completeness grounded in Dickens' death can be found in the reaction which I discussed briefly in the introduction to my previous chapter (on page 114), where the reader looks for points in the text which seem to point towards Dickens' death as a moment of *anagnorisis*: the death of the author then becomes the moment at the end that confers meaning on those particular passages of the text, lifting them out from the rest as of paramount importance. Both these approaches view the text as in some way complete, and this completeness is tied up with the boundaries provided by Dickens as author. Not all readers have felt this sense of wholeness, however. A third type of response, by far the most popular based on the volume of textual evidence, is no less anchored in the author as the conveyor of unity than the other two: the understanding that Dickens as author had intended for text to continue, and that the text as it stands is therefore only half finished, creates a desire for the "correct" completion with the intended ending. This chapter will look at attempts to arrive at the missing ending through speculation: the use of analysis and arguments to substantiate the case for a particular ending as in line with Dickens' own ending.

What separates this part of Droodiana from the completions discussed in my previous chapter, at least in the earlier periods, is the stated, explicit attempt to find

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> thereafter . . . but it also allows us to make meaning of both Dickens's novel and life as if what we have up to the end of chapter 22 is all there imaginatively is; it allows us to read that chapter as an ending of a finished manuscript rather than as the exact middle it has been for most previous readers. (Joseph 1996:170)

He observes that the title of the final chapter ("The Dawn Again") brings the circle of the narrative to a close by repeating that of the first ("The Dawn"); likewise Jasper's visit to the opium den in the final chapter, which provides the beginning of the dream that we only saw the final part of in the first chapter. The repetition brings the text to a close, allowing it to be seen as complete. Joseph here serves to illustrate the reader's search for coherence in the text as it is, reminiscent of similar readings of Sherlock Holmes discussed in my first chapter. Where the search for coherence was there focused on an apparently self-contradictory text, it is here directed at the incomplete. As such, Joseph, in relation to *Edwin Drood*, and Martin D. Dakin, in relation to Holmes (as discussed on page 57), are examples of the same tendency at opposite ends of the spectrum.

the "correct" development of the plot and arrive at the "correct" conclusion: speculations seek to identify the way in which Dickens would have completed *Edwin Drood* had he lived, and to make their understanding of the plot authoritative. And plot is the primary focus of these speculations: there is no real attempt to arrive at a final text with Dickens' words; the aim is almost always to present a plausible summary. This is done through references to other authorities, which are used to limit Dickens' freedom to invent, and thereby make it possible to arrive at a plausible conclusion. The defining characteristic of this branch of Droodiana, therefore, is that it always tries to justify its conclusions. As such, speculations have an approach to the novel which differs substantially from that of the completions, discussed in my previous chapter. They consist of analyses of the text and (generally) other sources, which are considered authoritative because they can in some way limit the potential that lies in Dickens' freedom to invent and thereby make his creative intention accessible. The accumulation of these close studies since Dickens' death has generated a number of possible plots, frequently contradictory.

These plots provide the opportunity to study an exaggerated example of the moment in the middle of the first reading, while the many potential plots of the text have not yet been restricted by an ending. As I discussed in my first chapter, the hermeneutic code can only be read in view of the end, towards which point all the provisional understandings of it are restructured and modified. With an end in view, the hermeneutic code illuminates the clues that point towards the correct solution, discarding those that did not. This is evident, for example, in William Robertson Nicoll's dismissal of Edgar Allan Poe's achievement in predicting the *dénouement* of

Barnaby Rudge based on Solomon Daisy's story of the murder in the first instalment: to Nicoll, having read the whole story, the enigma seems "obvious".[119] Because Nicoll had read the complete text, however, there is no way of ascertaining how accurate his evaluation of its "obviousness" really was.[120] Because *Edwin Drood* has no such ending to order and discard the provisional understandings of the plot by, it makes it possible to study the potential of readings that are still possible at this point in the middle of the reading process. And because Droodian speculation has continued over almost a century and a half, it also makes it apparent how our assumptions change over time. Before going on to discuss the development and particular period traits of Droodian speculation, however, the basis for such speculations should be made clear. I will therefore give a short introduction to the central enigmas and their basis in the text as they have been identified by Droodian speculation, and then briefly discuss the main external evidence referred to by speculations, before I move on to the discussion of periods of Droodiana.

There are two key questions which speculations have developed as the central enigmas of *Edwin Drood*. First, is Edwin Drood dead? And if so, did Jasper kill him and why; or if not, where is he (or who)? The majority of speculations point to Jasper's opium addiction and his expressed desire for Rosa and animosity towards his

[119]For a discussion of the controversy on whether Poe predicted the *dénouement* of *Barnaby Rudge* or not, see "Famous Dickens-Poe Mystery Solved at Last" in *The New York Times* of 1 June 1913.

[120]Similarly, one might ask how the plot of *Our Mutual Friend* would have been predicted had not Dickens survived the Staplehurst train accident in 1865. Because readers discard provisional plot understandings as new information is introduced, such contrafactual speculation cannot avoid taking into account the ending as it is (if it is known). It can, however, be observed in readers who do not have access to the ending: in the autumn of 2011 I taught a Master's level course on Dickens, and as a part of this course I had my students read *Our Mutual Friend* in sections (following the text's division into four parts); after part 3, the point at which the text would have been left unfinished had Dickens died at Staplehurst, a variety of plots were discussed. The majority of students believed that Mr Boffin was evil (and some believed that he had killed George Radfoot and that the suspicion that this was the case was the reason for John Harmon's still keeping his true identity a secret). They therefore read the character as one that would serve as an illustration of the dangers of wealth together with Silas Wegg.

nephew, and conclude that if Jasper did not kill Drood it was not for lack of trying.[121] In addition to these more general indications, speculations draw on more minute textual evidence: primarily Jasper's warning to Edwin at the beginning of the book (Dickens 1982:11-12); the "unaccountable expedition" to the Cathedral, the strangeness of which is continually emphasised by the narrator (Dickens 1982:103-110); the interest in quicklime (Dickens 1982:103), the apparent drugging of Neville (Dickens 1982:59-62); the change in Jasper's opium dream (Dickens 1982:209-10); and the Opium Woman's warning to Drood that "Ned" is in grave danger if he has a sweetheart (combined with the fact that only Jasper calls Edwin "Ned") (Dickens 1982:127-28). There is no consensus, however, on whether Jasper succeeded in murdering his nephew. On the contrary, the disagreement on this point is, as I will show in the following section of this chapter, one of the main catalysts for the beginning of published Droodian speculation. Those who believe that Drood lived are often termed "resurrectionists", a term I will adopt in my discussion here.

The second major enigma in Droodian speculations is the identity of Datchery: speculations ask who he is and how he is involved. "Dick Datchery" first appears in chapter 18, "A Settler in Cloisterham". He has the distinction of being both the last character introduced and the last character described by Dickens.[122] It may be

[121]I write "the majority" because, as I will show in the section of this chapter which focuses on the interwar speculations, there are those who argue Jasper's innocence. The most prominent of these is Félix Aylmer.

[122]After a conversation between the Opium Woman and Datchery, in which the former indicates her familiarity with Jasper, the text ends:

> Mrs. Tope's care has spread a very neat, clean breakfast ready for her lodger. Before sitting down to it, he opens his corner cupboard door; takes his bit of chalk from its shelf; adds one thick line to the score, extending from the top of the cupboard door to the bottom; and then falls to with an appetite" (Dickens 1982:217).

that his position at the very end of the narrative as it stands has overemphasised his importance: the tendency to order narrative in view of the end, as I have already pointed out, is not suspended until the arrival of that end; instead, it is continuously reordered and reinterpreted as new information is provided. This naturally confers a particular importance on the final finished scenes of Dickens' text, and with them Datchery, all the more so as Datchery is himself shown engaging in mysterious actions closely tied to the enigma of Drood's disappearance: he not only retraces Jasper's meetings with Sapsea, Durdles, Deputy and the Opium Woman, he also seems purposefully to place himself close to Jasper himself (Dickens 1982:162-3). Datchery is generally read as a detective figure, if not as a professional detective. Speculators observe that he shows an inordinate interest in, and a surprising knowledge of, Jasper and the people Jasper is thought to have made use of, and that this pointed interest would seem to contradict his claims that he is merely an "idle dog who lived upon his means" (Dickens 1982:161). This perception that Datchery is not who he claims to be is fuelled by the possible indications that he is in disguise, wearing a wig.[123] The identity of Datchery and the suggestions surrounding his possible identity will be discussed more fully in the second section of this chapter. In addition to these two primary enigmas, one of which would seem to relate to the crime and the other to its revelation, speculations also seek to predict the unravelling of the plot based in other indications in the text as it stands: the function of the nearly identical Landless twins, and Helena Landless' history of dressing as a boy; the

[123]Speculations point out that the colour of his eyebrows does not match his hair, as he is described as "a white-haired personage with black eyebrows" (Dickens 1982:160); moreover, his "head was unusually large, and his shock of white hair was unusually thick and ample" (Dickens 1982:161); and he walks around "with his hat under his arm" (Dickens 1982:165,166), and "clapping his hand upon his head as if with some vague expectation of finding another hat upon it" (Dickens 1982:166).

motivation (and possible "real" identity) of the Opium Woman and Deputy; and of course the question of how the characters will pair up for the traditional happy ending with a marriage.

Droodian speculations set out to answer these questions based primarily in the text itself, but also drawing, in varying degrees, on additional sources. The primary of these is John Forster's account of the plot (quoted on page 103). This was published in the final volume of Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens* in 1874, and claims that Jasper killed his nephew because he desired Rosa. As I indicated in my second chapter, however, Forster's account also raises questions of its own, such as why the plot would be "difficult to work" and how and why the confession would be presented "as told of another" (Forster 1874:426). Any speculation which accepts Forster's plot outline must also deal with these additional questions. In my second chapter I also pointed out that Forster was a close friend of Dickens, the executor of his will and his first biographer, and that despite this, his evidence has not been universally accepted as accurate. Dismissals of Forster's authority are based either in a claim that Dickens would have wanted to surprise his friend and therefore kept silent, or conversely one that Forster was attempting to exaggerate his own importance in Dickens' literary life.[124] As I began to suggest in my second chapter, and will develop further in the first subchapter here, however, there may be different reasons at work.

Another central source for speculation-writers is the illustrator Luke Fildes' information that Dickens had told him Jasper must have a double neck tie in a

[124]Richard A. Proctor, for example, writes that "I venture to assert that when Dickens said his idea was not communicable, he had not the least idea of communicating it immediately afterwards" (Foster 1878:469). And Andrew Lang writes that "Forster must have instantly asked that the incommunicable secret should be communicated to *him*, for he tells us that '*immeditaly after* I learnt' – the secret. But did he learn it? Dickens was ill, and his plot, whatever it may have been, would be irritatingly criticized by Forster before it was fully thought out" (Lang 1905b:48-9).

drawing because he would use it to strangle his nephew, and that the final illustration of the novel would show Jasper imprisoned for the murder of his nephew. Fildes reacted to the suggestions that Dickens might have misled him with derision (Fildes 1905:319).[125] In addition, there is Dickens' daughter, Kate Perugini's assertion that her father would not have set out to deceive Forster, and that, to the contrary, Forster would be the first to know if Dickens were to change the plot (Perugini 1906:644, 646); and likewise Charles Dickens Jr.'s preface to the Macmillan edition, in which he states that not only would Dickens have told Forster the truth, he had also himself been informed by his father that Drood was dead during their last walk together. [126]

Between the narrow focus on the text alone and the much wider reading which accepts as proof witness statements from the people close to Dickens, however, there is available a wide variety of evidence surrounding the novel. Common to this third type of evidence is the requirement for interpretation, and its position not entirely external to Dickens' text while at the same time not quite being a part of it.[127] The foremost example of this type of evidence is the cover illustration of the wrapper for each number (Illustration 2).

The same illustration was shown on the cover of each number. It was originally designed by Charles Collins (Wilkie Collins' brother and the first husband of Kate Perugini), but finally drawn by Fildes because Collins became too ill to work. The main controversy concerning this design is centred on the lower middle illustration, showing a man entering a dark room, holding a lantern, and finding

[125]See also How 1893 and Meynell 1884.

[126]This preface was first published in Britain in 1923 by Macmillan, but it must have been written earlier, since Charles Dickens Jr. died in 1896. I have been unable to trace it beyond the Macmillan edition, however.

[127]The title itself could be argued to form part of this type of evidence. Its reference to a "mystery" has been taken as an indication that the text can be read as closely structured by the hermeneutic code.

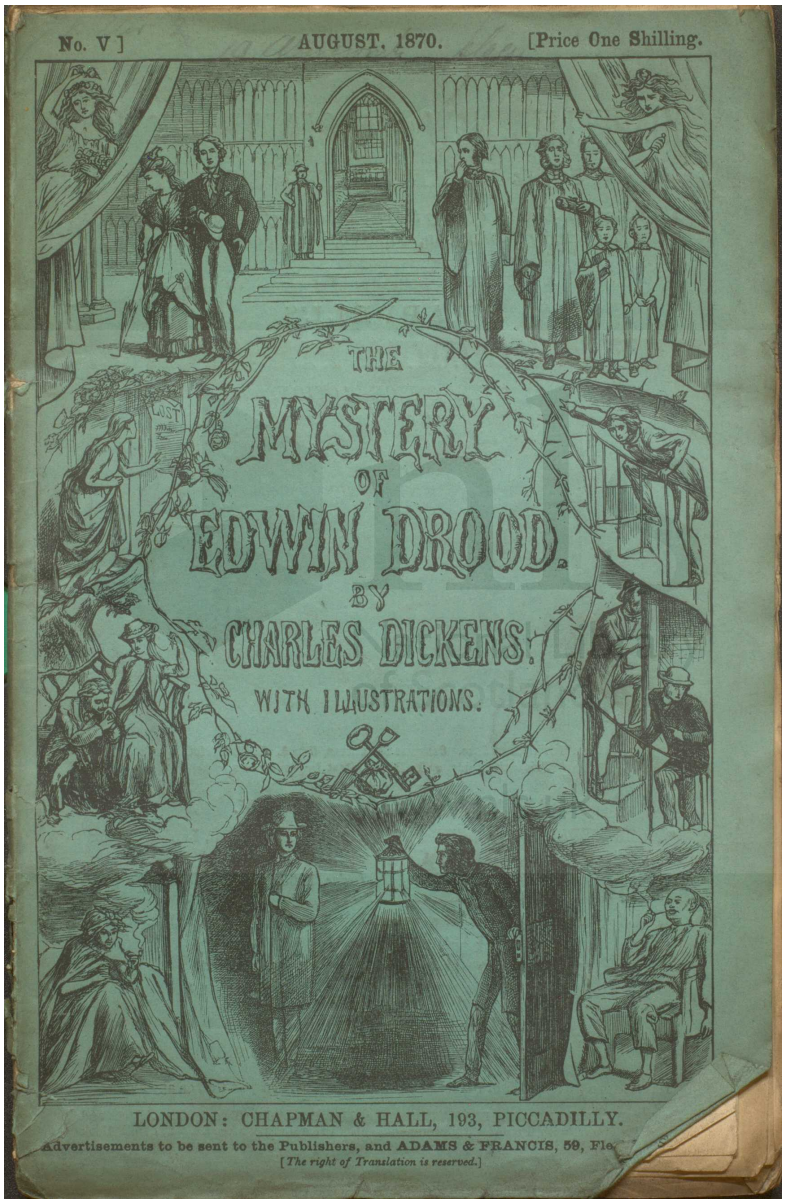

Illustration 2: Wrapper cover of *Edwin Drood* monthly number, August 1870.

another man apparently reaching inside his jacket. This is generally taken to be Jasper entering the crypt where he has disposed of his nephew's body, being confronted by what is taken to be either the "resurrected" Drood, Drood dressed as Datchery, Helena dressed as Datchery, Helena dressed as her brother, or occasionally Datchery in his own person.[128] The fact that the image is taken as evidence for all these conflicting

[128]For examples of this discussion, see Dubberke 1995 and Appendix E in Margaret Cardwell's Clarendon edition of *Edwin Drood*.

theories shows how open it is to interpretation; but because of its close connection to the text itself, and the belief that it was made on instruction from Dickens, it remains an important factor in speculations.

Other evidence of a similar type can be found in Dickens' memoranda book, in which he would note down ideas for future writings; the notes in the number plans for the existing numbers (as I have already noted, there are no number plans for the missing numbers, but Dickens can be read as motioning towards later developments in the existing ones); and his discarded titles for the book (in which "The Disappearance of Edwin Drood" and "Dead? Or Alive?" are taken to confirm the ambiguity). These texts, then, have to be interpreted much like Forster's evidence, and can therefore often be read in different ways and in support of widely different plots. They are ambiguous and resist unequivocal interpretation, but remain important because their ambiguity is outweighed by their potential authority, which in turn derives from their closeness to Dickens and Dickens' text (quite often as Dickens' own words).[129] The concern is similar to that which I identified as central to the explanatory notes appended to the unfinished works of Stevenson and Thackeray, in my second chapter: to tie the authorial freedom of creation to some authority which will limit it and make it recoverable. The authorities employed by Droodian speculation are quite diverse, however, and often contradictory; and they are perhaps at their most interesting in their limited ability to convince: not everybody accepts all, and a number of them are used to support diametrically opposite theories. Part of the

[129]In addition to these sources, arguments are based in the plots and themes of Dickens' earlier novels (perhaps especially *Our Mutual Friend*), as well as more general considerations of Victorian sensibilities (for example, could Dickens write about a girl dressing up as a man and swigging sherry by the pint, and could that girl then go ahead and marry the Minor Canon?).

purpose of this chapter is to discuss why.

My previous chapter showed that the authority to complete the text generally remains with the author; the aim of this chapter is to, with this in mind, explore the assumptions and authorities in play in the attempt to (re-)construct the plot. I will show how Droodian speculation has developed different strategies in order to deal with the lack of an authorial plan, and identify these strategies and the assumptions they make about narrative and the authority to complete it. I will do this by exploring a change over time, focusing on particular new tendencies in each period. While this separation into periods is to a certain extent artificial, I believe it is necessary for a coherent discussion of the material.

The first section will look at early examples of Droodian speculation, written before the foundation of *The Dickensian* in 1905. I will here discuss the origin of Droodian speculation as arising from the opposition between the "resurrectionist" view that Drood is still alive, primarily propounded by Richard A. Proctor, and those who accept Forster's plot outline. I will draw on the discussion of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, introduced in my first chapter, in order to explain why Forster's outline was rejected by "resurrectionists" in favour of one where Drood survives.

In the subsequent section I will build on the points raised in the first, and explore how this expectation of a twist in the narrative comes to expression in the speculations, especially as Forster's account becomes more widely accepted. I will ask why most of those who accept Forster's plot outline still feel it is necessary to speculate about how the novel would have played out. The central point for this discussion will be the many proposed identities of Datchery. I will identify *why*

Datchery becomes the focus of these discussions by further exploring the requirement of the surprising twist. The central texts here will be those of J. Cuming Walters, Henry Jackson, William Robertson Nicoll and Andrew Lang.

The third section will focus on a new tendency in speculations, which becomes particularly salient in the inter-war period. These speculations have in common the introduction of events outside the text as it stands; that is, the creation of a backstory which is not provided to the reader in the text, but which is created in the openings in the text and based on a perception of the requirements of the narrative. This is in line with the earlier speculations, but the interwar speculations go further. I will discuss how the desire for textual coherence, the attempt to connect all the dots, becomes central to the speculations in this period; and it will also discuss how this goes together with a focus on the Oriental aspects of the text, and its connotations of mystery, as a way of enhancing the mystery aspect of the novel.

The final section will explore the view that Dickens' novel was never meant to be a "whodunnit", but an exploration of the criminal psyche, a demonstration of judicial justice, an attack on the Anglican Church, a *roman à clef* or something else entirely. It will show that in the postwar period, there is a move away from the emphasis on the peripeteic twist towards an exploration of the text without such genre restraints. My chapter will culminate in an investigation of the postmodern treatment of the problem in which the many possibilities of the novel are treated ludically.

5.1 Early Droodiana

Despite the early flurry of completions, no real public speculations emerged in the years immediately following Dickens' death. One early reviewer in *The Graphic*, following the first instalment of the novel, claimed that the mystery was missing and Edwin himself was "hardly susceptible to anything like mysterious treatment" ("Mr Dickens' New Story" 1870:438); and the same paper's review of the final instalment declares that "it is not difficult for a practised novel-reader to divine the catastrophe of the story" ("The Mystery of Edwin Drood" 1870:475): Datchery,

> of course, is no other than Edwin Drood, who has crept from the crypt by some unsuspected place of emergence, and who comes back disguised to Cloisterham to wait and watch. The very wrapper reveals the fact that when Jasper again enters the crypt, expecting to see his nephew a skeleton, he finds him alive. As to the marriage ceremony prefigured on that same wrapper, we leave its details to the imagination of our feminine readers. ("The Mystery of Edwin Drood" 1870:476)

This article shows no awareness of any need to argue in favour of one's the understanding of the plot, or to support it with evidence: the "of course" signals it as self-evident. The evidence of the illustration on the wrapper, similarly, is not perceived to require any further argument to back up the conclusion that this is Drood alive in front of Jasper. The problem of how to order the couples for the Dickensian finale with its obligatory weddings (there is one groom too many if either Drood or Neville survives) is dismissed as unimportant and only of interest to "feminine readers".[130] The lack of justification for a given position distinguishes this piece from

[130]This is particularly interesting because this imbalance of couples has been used as an argument that both Neville and Drood must die (e.g. Baker 1951:8): Neville and Tartar (and possibly Drood) are candidates for marriage with Rosa, while Crisparke and Drood are both admirers of Helena. The question of why this particular plot seemed so obvious may perhaps be found in the April 1871 *The Dublin Review*, which contains a review of Dickens and Thackeray in which *Edwin Drood* is dismissed as a repetition of *Our Mutual Friend*, with Edwin as Julius Handford and Rosa as Bella Wilfer. This may also be the unexpressed reasoning behind the review in *The Graphic*, quoted above.

speculations proper: it has yet to be confronted with alternative views and can present itself as self-evident. The awareness of conflicting readings and opinions is central to the development of Droodian speculation as I understand it here, and readings which argue their point. The lack of early speculations is noteworthy, especially considering the dominance of such speculations in the later history of the work. On the whole there are few attempts to justify the claims made with regard to plot (generally presented as self-evident) until the late 1870s.

Frustrated readers at the time may have been waiting for information on what indications could be found among Dickens' papers. An article in the *Birmingham Daily Post* in June 1870, immediately after Dickens' death, expresses hope that memoranda may be found to suggest the direction of the plot. This was not immediately forthcoming, however: Forster did not reveal what he had found in his role as executor and biographer until he published the final volume of his biography on Dickens in 1874, four years after Dickens' death. Even then, Forster's biography provided little new information relating to the plot of *Edwin Drood*: Dickens had not left any plans for his later chapters, and while Forster did uncover what has come to be known as "the Sapsea fragment", this is generally considered more in the vein of an early draft of the character than a further plot development.[131] Forster did, however, quote Dickens' letters to and conversations with him, and in these he provides a plot outline in which Jasper kills his nephew and is revealed as the

[131]The Sapsea fragment shows Mr Sapsea in a conversation with a Mr Poker, very reminiscent of one that Mr Sapsea holds with Datchery in the novel as it stands. As is the case with all of Droodiana, there are those who would argue that this was meant to be included in the finished novel. Edwin Harris makes use of this fragment in his sequel, *John Jasper's Gatehouse*, which presents Poker as Helena in disguise (Harris 1931:102-10, 161). Michael Slater, in his biography of Dickens, however, draws on a discussion by Katherine M. Longley and Charles Forsyte, and reads the fragment as a fragment of an unwritten Christmas book planned for 1868 (Slater 2009:587-88).

murderer through the gold ring in Drood's inner pocket (Forster 1874:425-6).

In the period leading up to Forster's revelation, however, three completions of the novel had been published, all with an ending in which Drood survives his uncle's attack.[132] Then, in 1878, two years after Forster's death, Thomas Foster (a pseudonym of the British astronomer Richard A. Proctor[133]) published a 20-page article in *Belgravia*, which claimed that while Jasper did *try* to kill Drood, he did not succeed. Proctor's article is the first thorough published analysis of *Edwin Drood*, and it is of course interesting because of its position as a starting point. However, its interest for my thesis lies primarily in two further aspects (related to this first): Proctor's speculation, in attempting to support his position against the authority of Forster's outline, provides some insight into the possible, but unstated reasoning behind the early assumption that Drood had survived; and it is also interesting because of its influence on the development of Droodiana as a whole, both in terms of the arguments used and the strategies adopted. Proctor's contribution therefore warrants close attention, despite the absence of a reaction (in terms of volume) like what can be

[132]First, the parody by Robert N. Newell under the name Orpheus C. Kerr, *The Cloven Foot*, which had been publishing alongside Dickens' novel, and which on Dickens' death wrapped it up quickly with a happy ending; second, Morford's *John Jasper's Secret* (1871) and finally, the Spirit pen completion by T. P. James (1872), discussed in my previous chapter. Together with the understandings of the plot expressed in for example *The Graphic* and *The Dublin Review*, this suggests that the belief that Drood had survived was generally accepted in the early 1870s. Charles Dickens, Jr. also mentions a theatre production, called *The Mystery of Cloisterham*, at the Surrey Theatre (with Henry Neville as Jasper) "with a live Edwin Drood turning up, disguised as a barrister, at Neville Landless' trial" (Dickens 1923:xvii). Dickens, Jr. claims that Forster had sanctioned this production, despite its divergence from the plot outline he himself presented as authoritative in his *The Life of Charles Dickens*.

[133]The identification of Foster and Proctor is made by Cox, and it is supported by the similarity of the publications under both names. Because of the similarity between the names Forster and Foster, I will refer to Proctor as Proctor throughout. The citations will be given under the published name, however. Proctor writes in the same manner, using the exact same arguments under both names, but he does attempt to distinguish the two, as in the last of the articles by "Foster" on the subject in *Knowledge* (a popular science magazine edited by Proctor) in 1884, where he writes that a piece of evidence has been "overlooked by all who have examined the story (except Mr. Proctor and myself, who take the same view of the plot)" (Foster 1884b:400). While the articles are published under the pseudonym, their collection in book form is published under Proctor's real name.

found in the following period.

The main argument in Proctor's deviation from Forster lies in his claims that the "tone with which the leading characters are spoken of, should leave no one familiar with Dickens' manner in the least doubtful as to the general nature of the fate which was at the end to be allotted to them" (Foster 1878:453). These "tones" are according to Proctor recognisable from Dickens' other writing, and the assumption which this rests on is that there is a continuity within Dickens' authorship which enables the attentive reader, "familiar with Dickens's manner" to predict the destiny of the various characters: "[t]he music of the words," which is not properly audible to the average reader, tells "those who have ears to hear" that Drood "is not to die, albeit the reader is to think him dead" (Foster 1878:466). However, Proctor's analysis is not entirely based on this type of vague declaration (which are closely related to the "of course" in the early reviews). Drawing on specific examples from Dickens' earlier works, he identifies what he believes to be a recurring thematic structure, a "favourite theme" in which a villain is unknowingly watched by those he believes to hold no danger for him.[134] The primary authority Proctor offers is, then, the claim of a continuity within Dickens' writing: the expectation that Dickens would adhere to established patterns and do again what he had done before.

[134]Examples include "Hunted Down", in which he finds"the idea of a man supposed by a murderer to have been an unsuspecting victim, 'starting suddenly into a determined man with a settled resolution to hunt down and be the death of' the villain" (Foster 1878:469); and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, where he finds his pattern for the culmination of *Edwin Drood*: he claims that while Drood would have survived, Jasper would be condemned for the death of Neville, perpetrated to cover his tracks, "much as Jonas Chuzzlewit, innocent in reality of the death of old Anthony Chuzzlewit, is brought to his end through the murder of Montague, the very crime by which he had hoped to make himself secure" (Foster 1878:473). This idea is also the central premise of Proctor's later writing on the subject: "[A] favourite idea with Dickens was the thought of a watch kept on a villain or a hypocrite by one whom he despised as powerless to injure him" (Foster 1884b:387).

It should be noted that Proctor's rejection of a plot in which Drood dies is not based in an ignorance of Forster's claim; quite the contrary. Proctor relies on Forster's biography and its claims with regard to *Edwin Drood* in his article, quoting several of the relevant passages:

> He [Forster] repeats what Dickens had told him about his intention, that being precisely what Dickens seems to suggest in the story itself, and therefore precisely what I conceive Dickens did not really intend, so far as the true 'mystery' was concerned. . . . if 'Jasper murders Drood and is eventually convicted by means of the gold ring which had resisted the corrosive effects of the lime into which he had thrown the body,' then the mystery is transparent from the beginning. But Forster himself says that Dickens had described his idea for the story as 'a very new and curious one,' and 'not a communicable idea (or the interest of the book would be gone), but a very strong one, though difficult to work. I venture to assert that when Dickens said his idea was not communicable, he had not the least idea of communicating it immediately afterwards. (Foster 1878:468-9)

Proctor, then, quotes Forster against Forster, based in the central assumption that the idea that is "not communicable" must be a plot twist which Dickens kept back from Forster (either because he did not trust him or because he wanted to surprise him). The plot which Forster claims Dickens intended is then rejected because it is "precisely what Dickens seems to suggest in the story itself, and therefore precisely what I conceive Dickens did not really intend, so far as the true 'mystery' was concerned". This idea will form a central part of subsequent Droodian speculation, even among those who disagree with Proctor's understanding of the plot. The requirement that the plot should provide a twist which will lay the ground for a satisfying end to the narrative here comes to invalidate Forster's authority as a friend and confidant of the author: the satisfaction of the ending depends on the unexpected revelation, an expectation which can be identified with Kermode's "disconfirmation followed by consonance" (Kermode 1967:18) discussed in my first chapter. The many

ominous comments made by Dickens' narrator highlights those clues which point towards the revelation of Jasper as a murderer, and they do this so consistently that a plot resolution which confirms what they suggest does not allow for any experience of "disconfirmation". It would therefore not be satisfying, and Proctor concludes it must therefore be dismissed.

The cornerstone of Proctor's claim, then, is that Dickens skilfully hid his intention, both in the novel and in relation to Forster, precisely in order to create such a satisfying ending with the experience of *anagnorisis*; this is grounded in the assumption that the central aspect of the novel's plot would have been the "mystery". Commenting on the narrator's ominous allusion to the gold ring's "invincible force to hold and drag" (Dickens 1982:119), for example, Proctor writes that

> [f]rom the stress laid upon this point, we may safely infer, I think, that it is intended partly to mislead the reader. … He would conclude that Jasper had determined to remove all jewelry [sic] from the clothes of his victim, that nothing might be left which the quicklime would not destroy. But the natural inference that Jasper having on the night of the attack carried out this purpose, the ring of jewels concealed in Drood's breast remained, and was eventually found amongst the quicklime, and so led to Jasper's conviction, would I think have proved altogether erroneous. (Foster 1878:463)

He considers "the stress laid by Dickens on this ring of jewels, always a suspicious circumstance when he is purposing to keep a mystery concealed" (Foster 1878:463) and "the clearness with which we seem to recognise that the murder has been successfully accomplished … only make it more probable that what seems thus clearly suggested is not what has actually happened" (Foster 1878:465). Any suggestion in the text itself pointing towards Forster's plot outline is, based on the premise that the text should have a surprising twist, taken as proof that Forster was wrong. The premise is that the text would be structured according to the demands of

the hermeneutic code, and that it will therefore only function satisfactorily if it manages to divert its reader from the "truth" until the arrival of the revelation of the ending.

It is in order to provide a plot that would be satisfactory according to these criteria that Proctor, drawing on his analysis of what he considers to be "Dickens' favourite theme", introduces what subsequently became a central motif of a certain type of Droodiana: Drood as Datchery.[135] Again, Proctor here lays the foundation for much of later Droodian speculation. His analysis of Datchery's appearance and behaviour makes it necessary for later speculation-writers to account for this scenario in their own theories; after Proctor, if Datchery is not Drood, then he must be someone else. Perhaps the most important contribution Proctor makes, however, is this: based in the perception that his position requires corroboration, he provides several close analyses of sections of the text.[136] It is not the vague reference to "tones" or "music" which is taken up by later speculation; the reliance on close attention to the text, combined with explicitly stated readings of particular sections makes it possible to pinpoint disagreement (and occasionally agreement), and is crucial to the

[135]Proctor is not the first to suggest this twist (see for example the review from *The Graphic* quoted on page 194); he is, however, the first to attempt to back up his position through arguments and analysis. He seizes on Dickens' expression "the Datchery assumption" in a conversation with Miss Hogarth quoted by Forster: "The Datchery *assumption*, be it remarked. … If Datchery were Drood, or Grewgious, or any other of the known characters of the book, one would speak of the 'Datchery assumption' as a convenient way of expressing that the character of Dick Datchery, 'an easy-going single buffer living on his means,' had been thus assumed; but otherwise the word would be quite incorrect" (Foster 1878:468). He then observes that Datchery "is certainly disguised. That shock head of white hair, which made him constantly forget that he had no hat on, was of course a wig" (Foster 1878:469). Moreover, "Datchery not only knows Jasper to be guilty, but has a strong personal feeling against him" (Foster 1878:469). Finally, an analysis of Datchery's conversation with the Opium Woman as well as his scoring system is proof that he is really Drood in disguise (Foster 1878:471-3).

[136]One such is his observation that the three wine glasses on Jasper's table indicate that the meeting between Durdles and Jasper was by appointment, and due to Jasper's interest in the key of the Sapsea tomb. The "unaccountable expedition" is analysed in detail. As is the meeting with Sapsea, for which he draws on the number notes as well as the text itself. Proctor traces how Jasper manipulates those around him, pointing to the interest in the key to the Sapsea vault, how Jasper with his perfect pitch sounds the key to the Sapsea vault, drugs Durdles and asks questions about quicklime.

development of Droodian discourse.

These early speculations, contradicting Forster, pass fairly unnoticed. Proctor had waited until after Forster's death in 1876 before publishing his analysis, and there was not yet a precedent for arguing minute points of textual detail in relation to this novel in public. The Droodian controversy could be said to really begin in 1884, when Proctor (still under the name of Thomas Foster) published another article in the magazine *Knowledge* (which was edited by Proctor himself) in June, analysing Datchery's meeting with Princess Puffer. This sparked an unsigned response from Henry Sutherland Edwards in the *Cornhill*.[137] His argument, based on the text alone, outlined a plot similar to Forster's and claimed that "[a]n ordinary reader must come to the conclusion that John Jasper got rid of his nephew, Edwin Drood" ("The Mystery of Edwin Drood. Suggestions" 1884:308). This then triggered a series of 10 articles by Proctor/Foster in *Knowledge*, titled "Dickens's Story Left Half Told. A Quasi Scientific Inquiry into *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*", which forms the bulk of Proctor's later published book on the subject.

Proctor's first reply to Edwards' article is interesting both as an example of the ferocity of early Droodiana and as an indication of what he considers to be at stake. He writes that

> The problem seems to me well worth considering by all who love Dickens, for the simple reason that once it is solved – as I am sure it can be and has been – the incomplete work need no longer be left unread, as it has been by many lest an interest which cannot be satisfied should be excited. I now add some remarks suggested chiefly by a recent rather feeble article on the subject in the *Cornhill Magazine*. (Foster 1884a:478)

[137] I owe the identification of the author to Cox, who observes that Howard Duffield and Grenville Cook identify the author as H. Edwards and Henry Sutherland Edwards, respectively (Cox 1998:335).

The purpose of Droodian speculation according to this perspective, then, is to make Dickens' fragment readable by providing closure to the text. Proctor is concerned that fear of the frustration connected to a mystery without a solution will keep readers from approaching *Edwin Drood* in the first place. The hope of providing satisfaction is closely tied to Proctor's already noted demand that the solution be surprising, as will be clear from my discussion of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* in my first chapter. Edwards' straightforward plot is dismissed as "rather feeble" precisely because it accepts the first impression of the narrative without looking for the hidden twist that Proctor requires.

Seizing Edwards' wording, the "ordinary reader", and turning it against him, Proctor writes that *Edwin Drood*

> is regarded by many as the least interesting of Dickens's novels. … I am convinced that the want of interest complained of is in reality due to an entire misapprehension of the nature of the mystery from which the story takes its name. The idea entertained by *the average reader* (whose ways Dickens thoroughly understood) is naturally that the mystery is of a commonplace kind. Edwin Drood has been murdered, they suppose, by Jasper. This is too obvious they conceive to leave any real mystery. … Of course the love scenes connected with the story would have given it interest - *thinks the ordinary reader* – as the story advanced towards its close. But the mystery of Edwin Drood was no mystery at all, *for the average reader*.
>
> To any one, however, who has studied the development of Dickens's work, or who has noted how in his later stories certain ideas were more and more dwelt upon, and certain devices more and more relied upon for misleading *the ordinary* and interesting *the thoughtful reader*. [sic] The "Mystery of Edwin Drood" not only promised to be but *is* a most interesting story. (Foster 1884a:478, my emphases)

The "ordinary reader", who Edwards claimed to represent, is here connected to the "commonplace", "the ordinary", the mundane and uninteresting lack of vision, which Dickens (still according to Proctor) set out to mislead in order to produce the desired experience of disconfirmation followed by consonance in the end. This "ordinary

reader"'s belief in the prosaic, straight-forward murder would, according to Proctor, have produced a delightful effect in the finished work; however, left with the fragment alone, the lack of vision and (more importantly) the attempts to spread this "misapprehension" in the *Cornhill* could threaten the reputation of Dickens' story itself: because of this inability to see past the red herring, the plot threatens to become "uninteresting", which is no better than the fear of frustration (due to the absence of closure) which might also keep readers away. Droodiana, here, becomes an attempt to safeguard Dickens' posthumous reputation: the plot of *Edwin Drood* determines whether Dickens was already a feeble "man three-quarters dead" (as Shaw claimed (Shaw 1937:vii)), unable to produce anything really worth reading; or whether he was struck down at the height of his creative power, in the middle of writing his masterpiece.

Proctor sets up an opposition between the "ordinary", or "average", reader who can see no mystery and who can only hope for some interest in the romance at the end (recalling how the original reviewer in the *Graphic* relegated that side of the matter to the "feminine readers"), and the "thoughtful reader" who can discern the interest in the story and redeem Dickens' text by deducing its real plot: "Studied in its true light, the story may be regarded as really telling all we need to know to enjoy every page and every line" (Foster 1884a:478). Read correctly, Proctor argues here, *Edwin Drood* is a masterpiece.[138] This premise, then, becomes a criterion for the

[138]Bradford A. Booth makes a similar claim in his introduction to Richard M. Baker's Droodian study: *Edwin Drood* is "tight, compact, highly unified. Every character, every action is meaningful; there is not an irrelevant sentence" (Booth 1951:viii). Chesterton, in his discussion of *Edwin Drood*, wrote that Dickens had only "one thoroughly good plot to tell", which he would only tell "in Heaven" (Chesterton 1911:218). These are the counterpoint to Shaw's dismissal of the text, and Q. D. Leavis' assertion that "[s]uch a set-up can be only melodramatic in its working out and *dénouement*, and there is no reason to suppose that we have lost anything of value by *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* not having been revealed to us" (Leavis and Leavis 1970:116-17). The interpretation of the plot of *Edwin Drood* has throughout

evaluation of possible plots: the "true" solution can be identified by the way in which it skilfully creates the sense of disconfirmation and consonance.

Also worth noting is Proctor's confidence that the "problem" of *Edwin Drood*'s plot can be (and has been) "solved". He does not consider his theory merely an approximation or a tentative reading, but casts it as the final word on the matter: "Very little of this suggested close of Dickens's Half-Told Story is invented. Dickens himself told very nearly all of it, in what the story itself discloses unmistakably, in what he said to Forster and to Miss Hogarth, and finally in the instructions to Mr Fildes respecting the illustrations" (Foster 1884b:401).[139] This confidence in the solvability of the plot can be connected to Proctor's claim to deal with the fragment "somewhat after the scientific manner" (Foster 1884a:478). Proctor was himself a respected scientist, and *Knowledge*, the magazine he edited, has the subtitle "An Illustrated Magazine of Science plainly worded – exactly described". It is an early example of the popular science magazine, setting out to communicate new scientific discovery or basic principles of science to a non-academic audience. The majority of the articles relate to the natural sciences, and it is significant that his series of articles on *Edwin Drood* appeared here.[140] It carries with it a suggestion that while termed only "A Quasi-Scientific Inquiry" it is still a serious study, using scientific principles to solve the problem (albeit directed at a subject which is perhaps not itself perceived as "scientific", literature). Science is then appealed to as the backing authority, much as history was in the case of *Denis Duval* and *St. Ives*, discussed in my second chapter.

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its history been closely tied to the evaluation of the text, and thereby to the construction of the image or narrative of Dickens as author.

[139]Dickens allegedly told Georgina Hogarth that he was writing "the mystery, not the history, of Edwin Drood" (Perugini 1906:654).

[140]Even the article that had first been published in *Belgravia* later appeared in an expanded version in *The Knowledge Library Series*' Vol 5, "Leisure Readings" (Foster 1884b:209).

The sense of the solvability of the plot is integral to the type of Droodian speculation that develops out of Proctor's early work, as is his allusion to scientific method. There appears to have existed a strong belief that if only one could apply the correct methods and piece the correct clues together, one would arrive at an indisputable solution, a belief which is closely connected with the nineteenth-century belief in science's ability to find answers to questions not traditionally labelled scientific.[141]

Proctor, under the name Foster, dominates this early period of Droodian speculation. He published a further, anonymous, article in the *Cornhill* in 1886 on the same subject of the "favourite theme", and finally a book length study under his own name in 1887, which became the starting point for most speculations in the following decades: *Watched by the Dead: A Loving Study of Dickens' Half-Told Tale*. As such, he is fundamental to all later work in this field, and the speculations of the following period all position themselves in relation to him, either for or against his theory. The most significant part of this analysis of the early period lies in how it shows that speculations proper develop as a reaction to Forster's claims of an authoritative plot outline because it does not conform to expectations of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. In order to counter Forster's authority, Proctor sets up alternative authorities: the primary is the perception of a continuity within Dickens' writing. In identifying a "favourite theme" he relies on the assumption of unity which Foucault identified as integral to the author-function. This continuity is used as a criterion for what can plausibly have been the plot of *Edwin Drood*. In addition, Proctor provides a precedent for close analysis of the text as a foundation for speculation, and couches his study in a rhetoric

[141] Another example of this would be Utilitarianism's attempt to arrive at a good moral law through positivist principles.

which ties it to the authority of scientific discovery. All of these tendencies are developed when Droodian speculation begins to flourish in the following period. But the main focus remains the desire for a satisfactory experience of *anagnorisis*.

5.2 The Golden Decade

Don Richard Cox used the term "golden decade" to describe the 10 years in which a quarter of the materials listed in his *Charles Dickens' The Mystery of Edwin Drood: An annotated bibliography* (which spans 1870-1997) were published (Cox 1998:xv). This "golden decade" begins in 1905 and ends with the beginning of the First World War. While the thirty five years between 1870 and 1905 had seen about thirty articles of speculations in print, and only one published book of speculations (that of Proctor), 1905 alone saw at least thirty five articles of speculations, and two books published on the subject: Andrew Lang's *The Puzzle of Dickens' Last Plot* and J. Cuming Walters' *Clues to Dickens' "Mystery of Edwin Drood"*. Before the end of the "golden decade", in 1914, more than 120 further new articles had been published, and four further books of speculations: Edwin Charles' *The Keys to the Drood Mystery* (1908), Henry Jackson's *About Edwin Drood* (1911), William Robertson Nicoll's *The Problem of Edwin Drood* (1912), and Montagu Saunders' *The Mystery in the Drood Family* (1914).[142] What, then, sets this period apart? Why, so long after *Edwin Drood*'s original publication, does the amount of publications on this topic suddenly increase so markedly? It was not due to any startling new discovery among Dickens' papers or any individual close to Dickens coming forward with new information. The fragment

[142]In addition there are some shorter publications, such as Jackson's *Notes Upon the Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1909) and C. A. M. Fennell's *"The Opium Woman" and "Datchery" in The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1913). Both were published separately, but Jackson's is only 20 pages long, and Fennell's only 32.

remained as it was, as did the available evidence. There are, however, at least three main contributing factors that can be identified in relation to this burgeoning interest in *Edwin Drood*.

First, the Dickens Fellowship was founded in 1902, and 1905 witnessed the creation of *The Dickensian*, a journal dedicated to the study and discussion of Dickens' life and work. This significantly changed the conditions for the reception of books of Droodian speculations. The scattered discussions in the first 30 years had taken place in a variety of newspapers, magazines and journals. Proctor, alone, had published his articles in *Knowledge*, *Belgravia*, *Cornhill* and *The Manchester Examiner*. As a result of this scattered publication, the main controversy had to be restated to some extent from the beginning each time: one could not assume that the readers of one magazine or newspaper or journal would also read the others. This pattern continued in the "golden decade" as well (with publications in *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Morning Post*, *The Manchester Post*, *The Daily Chronicle* and a number of others), but in addition there now existed a common forum for publications on Dickens, making it possible to build on and discuss the articles already published in a way that had not been possible before: *The Dickensian* offered (and offers) a forum in which people with a particular interest in Dickens could (and can) address other people with a particular interest in Dickens. As such, it made possible a much more focused discussion: speculation-writers could build on and refer back to articles which had previously appeared in *The Dickensian*, and could assume they had been read by other interested parties. In addition, this made it easier for someone with a particular interest in the topic to keep abreast of new book-length publications, as they

would be reviewed in *The Dickensian*.

Part of the high activity in 1905 is also explained by the fact that publication of the two books on the subject were made by active Droodians from opposite sides of the speculation field. J. Cuming Walters defends Forster's plot outline against Proctor, to a great extent using Proctor's arguments of satisfying endings against him. He concludes that the central mystery of the plot was not whether Drood was murdered by his uncle or not, but the identity of the person bringing him to justice: he thereby cements the Datchery question as a central issue in Droodiana, and provides his own theory that Datchery is none other than Helena Landless in disguise. This claim brought Andrew Lang into the discussion. He argued, to the contrary, Proctor's side; and with minor modifications to the resurrectionist theory he concluded that "[i]f Edwin is dead, there is not much 'Mystery' about him" (Lang 1905b:53) and that "Helena may be Datchery, but she ought not to be" (Lang 1905b:90).[143] Even in book form, then, Droodian speculations build on and react to each other. Droodiana as a phenomenon is fundamentally dialogic, as its beginnings also indicated: it springs out of the need to set out one's reasoning against another understanding of the plot, and throughout its history it builds on, revises, and expands upon arguments from all sides. While Droodians tend to present this process as leading towards increased unity (and an authoritative solution) through a Hegelian design of thesis-antithesis-synthesis or a steady uncovering of facts, it is perhaps more accurately described as a steadily changing exploration of new approaches to the text which must be articulated in order to set one reading apart from the others.

[143]Lang, in the 1890s, had lamented that a "constant war about the plot rages in the magazines" (Lang 1891:129) and reluctantly identified himself as a resurrectionist: "I believe for one that Edwin Drood was resuscitated; but it gives me no pleasure. He was too uninteresting" (Lang 1891:129).

Like Lang, whose focus is indicated by both the comments quoted above and the title of his book, the majority of new speculations emphasised the mystery aspect of the novel. The same focus is apparent in Walters' book, the title of which speaks of "Clues", drawing on the tropes of detective fiction. As I have shown, this emphasis on the structure began with Proctor; but it comes increasingly at the expense of an alternative approach which is based in a search for themes or common motifs. The argument in this "golden decade" deals primarily with what can be deduced from clues in the text and elsewhere. This change can be seen in light of the appearance and increasing popularity of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes from 1887 onwards.[144] In the years leading up to 1905 Sherlock Holmes had been killed off (in "The Final Problem" in 1893) and resurrected (in "The Empty House" in 1903).[145] By this time the figure of the Holmesian detective was very much a part of mainstream culture, as evidenced by the public reaction to Holmes' death described by Charles Higham.[146] The link between Sherlock Holmes and Droodiana can also be traced from 1905, and continues throughout the period (and later) in a series of pastiches in which Holmes either solves the mystery or declares it insoluble.[147] This linkage indicates the identification of *Edwin Drood* as primarily a mystery novel (rather than primarily a Dickens novel with or about a mystery), with the attendant genre

[144]The first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* was published in 1887, the same year that Proctor's speculations were published in book form. Proctor's type of analysis has therefore not been influenced by Doyle (although Edgar Alan Poe's Auguste Dupin had been first published in the 1840s). But the popularity of the analytical detective figure, not to mention the development of the genre itself, have clearly influenced those reacting to Proctor.

[145]1905 saw the publication of the collection in which the latter appears, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

[146]In *The Adventures of Conan Doyle* he writes that "not until the death of Queen Victoria seven years later was there such widespread mourning" (Higham 1976:114).

[147]In the first Holmesian pastiche involving Drood, "At the Sign of the Ship", written by Lang and published in *Longman's Magazine* in 1905, Holmes evaluates Proctor's and Walters' solutions to the mystery.

expectations and an increased focus on the expected satisfying twist of the narrative which would provide the moment of *anagnorisis* in the end.

Related to this point is the expectation of the solvability of the plot which was already present in Proctor, but which becomes increasingly apparent in this period. As I discussed in my first chapter, the belief in the solvability of the detective plot is based in the illusion, which is integral to the genre expectations of the detective story (although not necessarily an actual aspect of most detective stories), that the plot provides enough clues to be solved by the reader before the end; this illusion is created by the provision of clues, which typify a detective story. But the genre expectations of a detective story also come with an awareness that the plot will try to deceive its readers, as Proctor also observed. This expectation of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* is evident throughout the period in the approaches to *Edwin Drood*, and the attempt to distinguish false clues from true clues forms the main focus in the majority of these speculations.

J. Cuming Walters' awareness of the expectation of *peripeteia* resembles that of Proctor: Walters claims that Dickens "had become possessed with the idea that he could frame a plot entirely novel, original and baffling. The elucidation was to be his own secret, and a surprise to the reader. . . . It becomes a most interesting problem whether Dickens was equal to his self-assigned task (Walters 1905:14).[148] This claim is based in a reading of Forster's account, which is interpreted strictly in relation to the plotting and the mystery of the novel: the "something new" that is "difficult to work" is taken to mean a new plot twist. The interpretation of the secondary sources

[148]This same assumption can also be found in Lang's book, where he writes that "Dickens was more and more drawn towards the secret that excites curiosity, and to the game of hide and seek with the reader who tried to anticipate the solution of the secret" (Lang 1905b:vi-vii)

at this stage becomes an important part of the Droodian project. Forster is here being read in a particular way and with a particular purpose. As in Proctor's argument, moreover, Dickens' success in this perceived attempt to misdirect is here tied to the need to safeguard his posthumous reputation: it becomes necessary to identify a surprising and satisfying mystery (providing disconfirmation followed by consonance) which would prove Dickens "equal" to the task. Walters later continues,

> His crowning triumph would have been to confound that mass of superficial solvers who have since arisen. 'Edwin Drood' is in more than one way the most deceptive book that Dickens ever wrote. It abounds in pitfalls and in 'blinds'. It seems to yield up most of its secrets at the first perusal. But the experience of those who have read it oftenest is that the seemingly obvious explanation must be suspected or ignored. 'Edwin Drood' is perhaps the profoundest and most complex problem presented in this class of literature. Dickens displayed consummate science in the precision with which he arranged every detail, and weighted with significance the minutest facts. How well he threw the hunters off the trail can best be understood by examining the contradictory results of the most expert attempts to solve the mystery. (Walters 1905:17-18)

Walters' rhetoric here is very similar to that of Proctor: like Proctor, he argues that Dickens is successful in deceiving the "mass of superficial solvers", the equivalent of Proctor's "ordinary readers"; he stresses the prevalence of false clues, the "pitfalls" and "blinds", and the text's apparently immediately accessible secrets revealing themselves "at the first perusal"; and like Proctor he even concludes that this must mean these secrets are really misdirections, because "the experience of those who have read it oftenest is that obvious explanations must be suspected or ignored". Proctor's opposition between the "ordinary" and the "thoughtful" reader is here echoed in the "first perusal" versus the opinion of "those who have read it oftenest". What is more, the text's "every detail" and "minutest facts" are in Walters' reading "weighted with significance". That is to say, they contribute to the perceived end as

clues, rather than as (in the terms of the hermeneutic code), filler or noise.

However, while the style of arguments is almost identical to Proctor's, it is not used in support of Proctor's argument; on the contrary, Proctor's is the plot proposal that Walters is writing in opposition to: it "would have been so very commonplace, melodramatic, and even amateurish, that we could but assume Dickens had deceived himself as to the 'incommunicable idea'" (Walters 1905:28-29).[149] And because Walters, like Proctor, considers it his task to show precisely that Dickens was at his best in this final novel, this possibility must be rejected: the "commonplace, melodramatic, and even amateurish" nature of Proctor's plot is itself an argument against its plausibility as Dickens' intended plot, just as Forster's plot was rejected by Proctor for being "of a commonplace kind" (Foster 1884a:478). Walters writes that

> No author who understands his craft loads his work with unnecessary details. No one erects a stupendous fabric if it is to remain empty. If Jasper failed, half the material that Dickens accumulated with such care, was wasted, and the solemn problem becomes an irritating inanity. . . . All of which is bad art, so grossly bad, that Dickens would never have been guilty of it. (Walters 1905:40)

Dickens' excellence as a writer is the axiom of this type of Droodian speculation. Those who dismiss *Edwin Drood*, like Shaw did, as "only a gesture by a man three quarters dead" (Shaw 1937:vii), see no reason to study the fragment closely. Only the assumption that great care has been taken in the selection of every word justifies the minute attention to detail and the extrapolation from those details to major plot moves. The disparity in solutions, then, masks this similarity in reasoning: what appears to be the plot must be discarded because Dickens, being a good writer, would have constructed a better mystery plot.

[149]Montague Saunders, writing in 1914, similarly concludes "that all the evidence Proctor laboriously brought together was purposely introduced by Dickens with a view to that very end" (Saunders 1914:108).

Perhaps the clearest articulation of this assumption can be found in William Robertson Nicoll's *The Problem of Edwin Drood* (1912), which supports Walters' reading: it states that Dickens' "purpose was to provide hints which, when contemplated with what he called a backward glance, should appear luminous at the end of the story" (Nicoll 1912:104). As Walters', Lang's and Proctor's comments show, the Droodian tradition shows great awareness of how such "luminous" hints can only fulfill their function if it is not obvious from the outset that they are indications of the end. These "luminous" hints are recognisable as another description of the textual structuration that Barthes called the "true clues" of the hermeneutic code, as outlined in my first chapter. As I pointed out, the code relies as much on dilatory tactics and misdirection as on the true clues that will appear "luminous" in the end. This understanding of the structure of the mystery story, and the belief that Dickens wrote a narrative dominated by this code, is central to Droodian speculation in this period. Nicoll states explicitly that: "The solution of the problem, or rather, the materials of the solution, should be given, and yet the readers should be unable to detect the full significance of the preliminary statement till the complete clearing arrives" (Nicoll 1912:197). Nicoll's observation is only a more explicit statement of the expectation found already in Proctor and Walters, that there would be a twist to the story, and that the conventional reading was intended as a "blind" for the reader.[150] This places the reader as speculation-writer in a position where it becomes necessary to out-think Dickens. As I have already observed, in the context of Proctor and Walters, this approach is used to legitimise a number of contradictory plot outlines.

[150]It is possible that the clearer emphasis on this aspect of the text, and the increased reflection on the premises of Droodian speculation, follows from the sheer volume of "golden decade" speculations, which in their contradictory readings will have highlighted these issues.

Proctor's violent dismissal of Edwards' plot reading was in part due to what he considered the obviousness of Edwards' theory, which traced the readily apparent suggestion that Jasper killed his nephew (Foster 1884a:478); and Walters' treatment of Proctor followed the same pattern in dismissing Proctor's belief that Drood lived.

The problem with this approach lies in the impossibility of knowing beforehand what will look important in retrospect, a problem sometimes acknowledged by early Droodians (e.g. Nicoll 1912:194), but frequently ignored. Both Montague Saunders and J. Cuming Walters, for example, claimed to have arrived at "almost mathematical certainty" with regard to the direction of the plot (Saunders 1914:19; Walters 1905:17).[151] This line of argument shows an ability to acknowledge, even emphasise, the author's right and ability, even obligation, to deceive the reader, by throwing out false trails and clues; but it simultaneously claims to have avoided the pitfalls and arrived at a true solution by distinguishing the true clues from the false. The result of this situation, in which the conflicting reading could always be dismissed as the red herring, was a lack of precisely that definitive resolution that Droodians wanted.

While I claimed on page 208 that the unity Droodian rhetoric often presents itself as moving towards is elusive, it does manifest itself in this period in one respect, at least: with the exception of Lang, the book-length speculations in this period all accept Forster's claim that Jasper killed Drood. This is due to a growing awareness of the consistency of the witness reports from people close to Dickens, who all support Forster either with evidence of their own (like Fildes) or by stating that it would be

[151]It should be noted that Walters and Saunders do not agree on what this almost mathematically certain plot is.

contrary to Dickens' practice to mislead Forster (like Kate Perugini). The problem with Forster's plot outline, however, (as Proctor observed) is that it does not provide a satisfying twist to the narrative: if Jasper killed Drood, that is obvious from the beginning and the plot will provide no moment of *anagnorisis*. This leads to one of two conclusions: either the plot is not a mystery plot, after all; or there would be another revelation in the end. Walters is reluctant to give up the hermeneutic structure, and so turns to Proctor's observations around the "Datchery assumption", arguing that Forster was not deceived, but nor was he given the part of the plot that contained the surprising twist (that his plot outline was accurate, but limited). While Forster's plot outline is therefore accurate so far as it goes, Walters argues, the lack of a peripeteic twist is explained: "Who was Datchery? This is the actual mystery. This was the surprise Dickens had in store, steadily working up from the first. And its says much for his triumph that either this point has been belittled or entirely overlooked" (Walters 1905:48). If Drood is dead, however, he cannot reveal himself to be Datchery, and those who accept Forster's authority have looked for other candidates: there is a general consensus that Datchery is an existing character in disguise (with a minority view which states that he is not), and the question of the identity of Datchery is worked into the majority of proposed solutions to the plot.[152]

Walters argues that Datchery is really Helena Landless, citing primarily her enmity towards Jasper and her role as Rosa's protector (Dickens 1982:53-4), her

[152]Edwards' *Cornhill* article received Proctor's untempered scorn for daring to suggest that Datchery was a Detective (Foster 1884a:479). It was also dismissed as "empty air, and unworthy of serious thought" by George Gadd in an article in the very first number of *The Dickensian*, where he argued that Tartar was the man (Gadd 1905a:13). A coherent case has been made for Datchery the Detective, however, in Ray Duberke's *Datchery, Drood and the Detectives* (1992), which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter. Willoughby Matchett, in a seemingly postmodern twist, suggested that Datchery could have turned out to be Charles Dickens himself (Matchett 1914).

interest in helping her brother and her history of dressing as a boy (Dickens 1982:47). Apart from Helena and Drood, the main contender for the position of Datchery is Grewgious' clerk, Bazzard, a notion which had already been introduced by Kerr in 1870, and which has proved to be long-lived.[153] The basis for the theory lies in Bazzard's connection to the theatre and his absence from Grewgious' offices: "he is off duty here, altogether, just at present; and a Firm down stairs with which I have business relations, lend me a substitute. But it would be extremely difficult to replace Mr. Bazzard" (Dickens 1982:180). Other candidates include Tartar, Neville, Grewgious, Lobley, and tangential characters like Bazzard's father and Drood' father; it has also been suggested that he is a new character who is really a former victim of Jasper's, the real Jasper, Drood's former guardian, Drood's uncle, Crisparkle's uncle, or even Charles Dickens himself. G. K. Chesterton, in his *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens* (1911), jokingly offered Miss Twinkleton as a candidate (Chesterton 1911:227-8). This interest in identifying Datchery with a known character is related to the search for interconnections and elegant solutions (not always successful): Saunders, writing in 1914, states that it "would be more satisfactory to identify Datchery with a known personage" (Saunders 1914:82), but that he could see no way of doing it. The satisfaction Saunders alludes to is due to a sense of coherence, more pleasing because it ties off plot threads internally (related to the rejection of *deus ex machina* and Aristotle's "necessity", discussed in my first chapter). The next sub-chapter will show how this tendency in Droodiana becomes

[153]Edwin Harris, writing a sequel to Dickens' novel in 1931, could seemingly not decide between the choices of Helena and Bazzard, and ended up making use of the Sapsea fragment, which in an early draft of the Datchery character calls him Poker, to allow both characters to fill the role: Helena is Poker; Bazzard is Datchery (Harris 1931:161, 221).

more central to speculations in later periods.

The Helena/Datchery theory sparked a strong reaction, with discussions of whether it would have been possible (or proper) for a young girl to dress up as a man, live alone and eat and drink what Datchery eats and drinks; whether Grewgious would allow Helena to do such an improper thing; and whether *Dickens* would allow Helena to do such an improper thing.[154] The function of these arguments is to limit the profusion of possible plots and to identify the more plausible one by limiting Dickens' freedom of creation: on the one hand one set of Droodians claim that there is no way Dickens would have introduced the idea of Helena as dressing in male clothing if he were not going to employ this device later in the text; on the other he is expected to have her act in accordance with the social rules of the period, all the more so if, as Forster claimed, she is destined to have Mrs Crisparkle as a mother-in-law. Requirements for coherence are not limited to the clues of the hermeneutic code or interconnections between points of the text; they extend to the consistency of characters, who cannot be allowed to act contrary to their established character. This expectation or desire for coherence, then, is a keynote of Droodian speculation in all forms, although it comes to expression differently across the various proposed plots:

[154]This discussion would generally draw on interpretations of the cover illustration on the wrapper of the monthly parts, in particular the image of the two figures facing each other in the bottom centre. The cover illustration is used to support the primary argument, and does this primarily by showing coherence or non-contradiction between the theory and this additional evidence, as the image is not conclusive in any direction by itself. One of the figures is generally believed to be Jasper, the other becomes whomsoever a particular theory claims is disguised as Datchery. This illustration has been taken to show that Drood is alive and that Proctor has therefore been right all along, and the obverse.

The arguments are combined to create a mutually reinforced synthesised whole which claims, for example, that Helena Landless must be Datchery because (i) we know she has dresses like a boy, (ii) we know Dickens would make use of a hint like that, and (iii) the cover image shows Helena as Datchery confronting Jasper in the crypt (e.g. Walters 1905:109). The resurrectionist argument will claim that Drood, not Helena, is Datchery because (i) a girl destined to be a clergyman's wife cannot decently dress and drink like a man, (ii) Dickens would attend to such matters of decorum, and therefore (iii) the picture must be Drood returned from the dead (and therefore never dead) to confront his uncle. A good discussion of the various readings of the cover can be found in Cardwell 1972.

it is evident early on in Proctor's creation of continuity within Dickens' writing, and also in the developing emphasis on the coherent plot in which "all is meaningful"; in addition, the desire for coherence can be found in the wish to identify Datchery with another existing character, and in the requirement that characters conform to their established traits.

Towards the middle of this "golden decade", following Edwin Charles'[155] publication of his *Keys to the Drood Mystery*[156] (1908), *The Dickensian* closed its pages to Droodian discussion for the first time, "for the present at any rate" (Matz 1908b:87). The number in which this was announced included seven entries debating the usual questions of Jasper, Datchery and what authorities can be trusted to have known what. There followed a noticeable mid-period lull (less than a handful speculations were published in 1909 and 1910), suggesting the close connection between Droodiana and *The Dickensian*. Droodiana returned to the *The Dickensian* in 1911, however: Professor Henry Jackson published a book on the subject, seeming to soundly reject Proctor's claim that a properly methodical speculation might provide a satisfactory ending to the story:[157] "I do not believe that any ingenuity of conjecture

[155]Cox cites Grenville Cook as identifying this as the pseudonym of a Charles E. Grigsby (Cox 1998:xxii).

[156]He provides an analysis in the first half of his book, and a sequel based on this in the second. In his analysis he points out several echoes of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the fragment, arguing that this is a sign that Drood is indeed dead; the very phrase "When shall these three meet again" (the title of Chapter 14 in *Edwin Drood*, which is the chapter in which Edwin is last seen), which to Proctor proved that they would, is here taken as an indication that they will not (Proctor 1887:63). Charles argued that the allusion to *Macbeth* was meant to convey the sinister atmosphere of that play, as well as present the parallel between Drood and Duncan, both murdered by trusted hosts who coveted what they possessed (Charles 1908:5-6, 48-54).

[157]Henry Jackson's scholarly credentials as Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge may have lent him the authority needed to reopen the discussion. Cambridge itself has a particular position in Droodian speculation in the period: whereas both Lang and Walters' books were published by Chapman and Hall, Jackson's book was published at the Cambridge University Press (as was Montague Saunders' in 1914), and the *Cambridge Review* published both a series of supposed minutes from the meeting of an "Edwin Drood Syndicate" written by Montague Rhodes James, concluding that Drood is Datchery (James 1905), which sparked a series of six further contributions by four different individuals, debating primarily the identity of Datchery. Walters' influence can be traced in the claim by two of the contributors that Helena

can supply what Dickens did not live to write. . . . I attempt, not to add to what Dickens has left to us, but to make clear and definite so much of the story as is covered by the twenty-three extant chapters, and to elucidate certain details which seem to me to have been misunderstood or overlooked" (Jackson 1911:vii). While Jackson phrases his aims as more modest than those of those who would "supply what Dickens did not live to write", that is, the conclusion to the novel, his analysis is more ambitious than it may seem at first: as my discussion in my first chapter made clear, the ability to make sense of the beginning and middle of a narrative is dependent on access to the ending (or an imagined ending). Setting out what has happened (by interpreting the meaning of a given detail), therefore, is barely less dependent on speculation than projecting the new developments of the plot as it would have progressed: the end always retains the possibility of introducing a rewriting of what we have already seen. This is especially true in the type of text that is dominated by the hermeneutic code, where the future actions of the characters will consist in an unravelling of the truth of what has gone before. Rather than a modest, unbiassed investigation of what is objectively there in the text, Jackson's attempt is therefore very much in line with the vast majority of Droodian speculation of the period.[158] Jackson ends up on the side of Walters in both the question of Drood's death and the identity of Datchery (although he would later recant the latter).

The same questions, and their various answers, provide the central focus in what can be seen as the culmination of the debates of the period: "The Trial of John

is Datchery, and the urgency with which the others focus on rejecting this theory.

[158]Jackson's speculation is, however, the first to consult the manuscript for clues, and he is credited with identifying the misprint of "town" for "tower" in the first edition, which was changed in Cardwell's Clarendon edition (Dickens 1982:137,n1).

Jasper; Lay Precentor of Cloisterham Cathedral in the County of Kent, for the MURDER OF EDWIN DROOD, Engineer", which was held by the Dickens Fellowship in the King's Hall in Covent Garden on January 7th 1914. Jasper stood accused of "feloniously, willfully, and of his malice aforethought did kill and murder one EDWIN DROOD against the peace of every true Dickensian" (Ley 1914:7). The trial is significant primarily as an indication of the popularity of the Drood question at the end of this period. George Bernard Shaw was the foreman of the jury, and G. K. Chesterton sat as judge.[159] J. Cuming Walters served as prosecutor together with the editor of *The Dickensian*, B. W. Matz; the defence was led by Cecil Chesterton and Mr. W. Walter Crotch.[160] While the majority of witnesses were held to a strict adherence to Dickens' text, the prosecution and the defence were both allowed one witness that was given a greater liberty of interpretation than the others, being allowed "to make statements not made in the book, provided that they are not contradicted therein" (Ley 1914:11). The prosecution's witness, Helena, presented evidence she claimed to have gathered while masquerading as Datchery (following Walters' theory); similarly, the defence witness, Bazzard, also presented evidence he claimed to have gathered while masquerading as Datchery, leaving the jury to decide

[159]In fact, the trial gathered a number of the personalities central to Edwardian literary life.The production featured Bransby Williams, who had already made a career out of playing Dickensian characters on stage, as Durdles; Arthur Waugh, the father of Evelyn Waugh, who was then the managing director of Chapman and Hall, as Crisparkle; Mrs Laurence Clay (Laura Augusta Mary Clay), who had published *The Dickens Reciter*, as Helena Landless; J. K. Prothero (a pseudonym of Ada Elizabeth Jones, who would later marry Cecil Chesterton) as the Opium Woman and Mr C. Sheridan Jones (possibly a pseudonym of Ada Elizabeth Jones/Chesterton: "Sheridan Jones" is one of her pseudonyms) as Bazzard. The indictment was read out by Walter Dexter, the later editor of *The Dickensian*, and the jury consisted of, among others, the playwright Sir Francis Cowley Burnand, the philosopher and journalist William Leonard Courtney, the writers William Wymark Jacobs, William Pett Ridge, Hilaire Belloc, Max Pemberton, George Slythe Street, Coulson Kernahan, Edwin Pugh, Arthur Morrison, Ridgwell Cullum, Justin Huntly McCarthy and William Archer, as well as the historian Oscar Browning.

[160]Crotch was the author of *Charles Dickens, Social Reformer: The social teachings of England's great novelist* (1913), and following the trial published another two books: *The Pageant of Dickens* (1915) and *The Soul of Charles Dickens* (1916), all of which were published by Chapman and Hall.

between the two alternatives. In this way, the question of Datchery's identity became tied to the question of Jasper's success or failure in murdering his nephew (the defence did not dispute his attempt, but claimed he had failed).

While G. K. Chesterton, who served as the judge, belonged to the edges of the Droodian subculture throughout the period, Sylvère Monod would later call him the "most important figure in Dickens studies 1900-1920" (Monod 1970:111). Chesterton had already expressed the opinion that the question "can never really be settled precisely" (Chesterton 1911:226) because the writer of the detective story

> desires to keep his readers off the point. … Some of the points which we pick up as suggestive may have been put in as deceptive. Thus the whole conflict between a critic with one theory, like Mr Lang, and a critic with another theory, like Mr Cuming Walters, becomes eternal and a trifle farcical. (Chesterton 1911:227)

This understanding of the problem was not contradicted by the trial. Some, notably Cuming Walters, saw the trial as an attempt to resolve once and for all the contradictory readings of the plots through reference to an outside authority, that of the court. Nothing was resolved, however, as Shaw (immediately following the witness statements) rose and proclaimed that "we, following the tradition and practice of British Juries, have arranged our verdict in the luncheon interval" (Ley 1914:78), and that "the spirit of compromise and moderation prevailed, and we find the prisoner guilty of Manslaughter" (Ley 1914:79); G. K. Chesterton declared everyone present in contempt of court.[161] Although Walters and others blamed Shaw for sabotaging the trial, it would not have fulfilled their apparent hopes of a clear resolution, even without this intervention. A trial is grounded in a belief in an access to a truth that can

[161] Shaw had previously, in a letter to B. W. Matz expressed an opinion that Datchery was a detective figure, not another character in disguise, and that it could not be a crime to kill "an insufferable bore" like Drood (Cox 1988:28).

be verified through presentation of facts. Because this trial was based in the unfinished novel it was attempting to resolve, however, most of the witnesses were restricted to what could be verified in the text of the fragment. Those that were allowed to step outside these confines, Helena and Bazzard, both end up claiming to be Datchery as well as adding other information with no unequivocal foundation in the text, and the trial therefore merely perpetuated the controversy of the preceding decade, albeit in a more concentrated form.

The Trial caused a new interest in the *Edwin Drood* question, and Montague Saunders traced the inspiration for his book, which was published later the same year, to notices for the event.[162] Like Shaw, however, he concluded that Datchery could not be any of the known characters, despite his acknowledgement that a plot where he could be identified as another character in disguise "would be more satisfactory" (Saunders 1914:82). As such, the trial and Saunders' subsequent book can be read as part of a gradual disillusionment with the question of the identity of Datchery as the key to the mystery. Following Saunders' book, however, (and the controversy caused by his suggestion that Datchery is not one of the known characters but an entirely new one) *The Dickensian* again closed itself off from Droodian speculation in 1915, a moratorium which was to last until 1919.[163] After ten years of enthusiastic exchange of arguments, all sides were beginning to feel that little new was emerging; and despite both Saunders' claim to have arrived at "almost mathematical certainty" (Saunders 1914:19) with his theory, just as Walters had done in 1905 (Walters

[162]Félix Aylmer also traced his interest in the question to the trial and the attention it engendered (Aylmer 1964:1).

[163]This happened again in 1928, when Walter Dexter, as editor, declared that Bazzard was clearly Datchery, and there was no way Drood could have survived, and that he could therefore see no point in discussing it further.

1905:17), the belief in the possibility of arriving at a positive solution through arguments alone was apparently ebbing among the wider group of readers, despite the continued arguments of those, like Walters, who believed they had arrived at the solution.

While the "golden decade" ends with the beginning of the First World War, the war itself does not appear to have had any clear detrimental effect on the enthusiasm for the problem in the period that follows it: while there was a significant abatement in activity compared to the peak years of 1905 and 1912, there was steady activity up until 1935; and in 1919 and 1928 more was published than in any years prior except 1905 and 1912. As the following section will show, the war apparently increased the desire for coherence in the narrative. The arrival of the First World War, and the moratorium on speculations in *The Dickensian* put an end to this "golden decade", however; although the inter-war period saw a further considerable production of speculations, as I will discuss in what follows.

5.3 Hyperconnectivity and orientalism – the interwar period

While the First World War saw a temporary abatement in Droodian speculation, 1919 provides the third most active year in history to date and the interwar years as a whole formed the second major period of Droodian speculation. This may be due in part to a new surge of popularity for *Edwin Drood* at this time.[164] While the war, coupled with the moratorium in *The Dickensian*, provides a natural break in the publication of speculations on *Edwin Drood*, the transition to a new period is not clear cut. The

[164]B. W. Matz notes that it was named one of the favourite books of the war by *British Weekly* (Matz 1919:172).

debates of the previous period, primarily characterised by the preoccupation with the identity of Datchery and the desire to identify him with an existing character, continues into the next period: the first year of peace provides (out of 20 articles that may be said to be speculations) one article claiming Datchery is Grewgious (Thomson 1919); five articles claiming Datchery is Bazzard; six claiming that Datchery is Tartar (one of which is by Percy T. Carden, who claimed to have reached the conclusion after reading the novel backwards (Carden 1919)); one claiming Datchery is Datchery (Saunders 1919); Henry Jackson's retraction of his early support for the Helena/Datchery theory, declaring the problem insoluble (Jackson 1919); and, of course, two articles by Walters in which he regrets being drawn into the debate once again by those who obstinately refuse to see that he is right and additionally lamenting that professor Jackson saw the need to abandon the Helena/Datchery theory for one that he considers to be a less worthy one (Walters 1919a; Walters 1919b).[165] In 1928, which is the final year of any note in terms of the volume of speculation, only 14 essays of speculations were published, most of which were still concerned with the identity of Datchery, a debate in which Walters was still arguing his position against the rest.

Following a sharp rebuttal by Walters to yet another assertion that Datchery is really Bazzard, in which he declares that the identification of Datchery with Bazzard will continue as long as "infantile minds" read *Edwin Drood* (Walters 1928), a new wave of letters caused Walter Dexter, then editor of *The Dickensian*, to once again close the pages of the journal to this discussion. Dexter declared that as he had no

[165]It is worth noting that the majority of these speculations take place in the *Times Literary Supplement*, and that it then spills over into *The Dickensian* from there (I count 13 speculations in the *TLS*, 6 in *The Dickensian*).

faith in the possibility of Drood's survival, nor that Bazzard could be Datchery, he would only allow three more comments on the subject, representing both sides of the argument (Dexter 1928:171-2). This was the third (and, to date, final) time *The Dickensian* officially closed its pages to further speculation on the subject, and it is noteworthy that the moratorium was directed against the same two main enigmas which had formed the centre of readings in the "golden decade". It shows an impatience with a debate that in more than two decades had not led to a resolution, and which was not seen to be developing anything new. While the moratorium was not strictly enforced for any length of time, the realisation that old ground was being rehashed is apparent: the following year provided no public outcry, even when one essay argued that Grewgious murdered Edwin (Davies 1929) and another that Jasper had killed Bazzard rather than Edwin (Everett 1929). While the old debates on the identity of Datchery and the attempts to make sense of other perceived clues continued, however, another type of speculation began to emerge.

The new theories of this period have in common a belief that the enigma of the plot must be something more than merely whether Datchery is Bazzard or Helena. They follow the premises set down by earlier Droodian speculation, in that they expect the narrative to have a surprising ending which nonetheless will prove satisfying due to a sense of consonance with the whole. However, while earlier speculations generally limit themselves to reordering clues from the text as it stands, these show themselves more willing to take into account the fact that Dickens, had he lived, could have introduced new information (with regard to the back story of the characters) later in the book, and that such new information could have had

implications for the plot as a whole. Where the "golden decade" speculations focused on the understanding of what could be shown in the text as readers encountered it, the interwar speculations show a greater willingness to invent elaborate back stories, as long as they do not directly contradict the text as it stands. In other words, they go beyond the limitations Jackson, for example, explicitly set himself in his speculation, and which seem to have formed an unwritten rule for other speculations at the time: a limitation to the interpretation of the events of the extant narrative, and at most a suggestion of how these facts would be revealed by the detective figure or the concerted efforts of the heroes. This new development may be a reaction against the repetition of arguments made by the main factions of the debate, and a response to the lack of conclusive evidence from either, in the Datchery question.

At the very beginning of the period I am looking at in this section, in 1919, Mary Kavanagh[166] published *A New Solution to the Mystery of Edwin Drood*, in which she suggested that Datchery is Edwin's uncle, possibly even the real John Jasper (presumed murdered by the impostor presenting himself as John Jasper in the narrative) and quite possibly the real father of Neville and Helena (Kavanagh 1922b:282-3). Edwin Drood, meanwhile, is in this reading masquerading as Tartar (Kavanagh 1922b:266).[167] The foundation for much of Kavanagh's reading lies in the "Oriental" connection of a number of the characters in the novel: "so many of the characters are connected with the East, that it is impossible to doubt that they are all

[166]Mary Kavanagh is identified by Cox as Margaret M. Spain (Cox 1998:xxv).

[167]Her plot outline provoked a (presumably) sarcastic response from Carden stating that not only could Jasper be an impostor, Drood could be one too, and Tartar, masquerading as Datchery, could be the real son of the Drood family: "How aptly, too, in solving the mystery of his innocent supplanter's murder would Datchery-Tartar-Drood have discovered the history of his own displacement. And how well would the marriage of Rosa to the real and only son of her father's 'fast friend and college companion' have rounded off the story" (Carden 1922:149). Carden's response exaggerates to the point of absurdity Kavanagh's attempt to create connections within the narrative.

likewise connected with one another, through circumstances and events belonging to a past perhaps remote" (273). Kavanagh brings together Jasper's opium addiction and the connection it affords to Eastern characters like the Chinaman and the Lascar, with the Landless' connection to Ceylon and Drood's connection to Egypt: the true mystery, in this reading, lies in an Oriental backstory. This Oriental aspect was always present in Dickens' text, but questions of Empire and the Oriental are largely passed over in the pre-war analyses, which primarily emphasise the setting of the Cathedral town and its characters, perhaps because that is what was considered most "Dickensian". In Proctor, Walters, Lang and their contemporaries, the Eastern motif is seen as merely a sprinkling of the Oriental to add colour to the mystery, much like the Indian threat in Collins' *The Moonstone*. In other words, they see it as belonging to another code than the hermeneutic, except in so far as it could function as a misdirection. Kavanagh is the first to make it a major emphasis of her theory, and she is thus the first in a new trend in Droodiana: together with a strong desire for coherence, the Oriental comes to characterise Droodian speculation in the period between the two world wars. These two tendencies are not unconnected: the focus on the Oriental is used as a way of enhancing the mystery by drawing on the connotations traditionally attendant on the Orient.[168] Other speculations use the suggestion of mesmerism and telepathy for the same effect.[169] Both have heavy

[168]Edward Said, in his *Orientalism* (1978) writes about a "second-order knowledge" of a "mysterious East, notions of Asian inscrutability" (Said 1978:52). The way Kavanagh assumes a connection between such disparate areas as Ceylon and Egypt solely because of their designation as "Oriental" is a clear indication that she is heavily influenced by the latent Orientalist thinking which Said discusses. She is not alone in making this connection: Said notes "the connection between Egypt and India so far as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain was concerned" (Said 1978:17); this can be witnessed, for example, in Cromer's authority on "the Orient" because he had served in both Egypt and India (Said 1978:37).

[169]One such is Aubrey Boyd's "A new angle on the Drood Mystery" (1922).

connotations of mystery.

In addition the focus on the Oriental connection appears to be a symptom of the hyperconnectivity which characterises the plotting in this period. This, in turn, is based in a belief in coherence as proof of accuracy: Kavanagh and Aylmer, in particular, take as their starting point the Droodian premise that Dickens' ending would have tied together disparate plot points into a satisfying whole, providing the moment of *anagnorisis* at the end, and from this premise they develop an understanding that a speculation cannot be contradicted by the text at any point, and that the resolution should incorporate as many perceived clues as possible. This is an expression of Walters' earlier claim (quoted on page 212) that no artist worth his mettle would construct a large edifice just to leave it unused, but here the assumption is applied to a wider proportion of the text. All aspects of the novel are in such readings taken to be significant in terms of the hermeneutic code.

It appears to be significant in this context that the interwar years form what is known as the "golden age" of detective fiction. Agatha Christie published *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* in 1920 and *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* appeared in 1926. Stephen Knight, in his article on "The Golden Age" in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* writes that the "clue-puzzle" becomes the defining form of the period. The illusion that the reader should be able to arrive at the solution independently of the detective's revelation is central to this variation of the detective genre, as is the expectation of what Knight calls "fair play" (Knight 2003:79). Sometimes, as in Ellery Queen stories (beginning in 1929), this expectation is made explicit in a "Challenge to the reader" at the point where all clues have been provided.

These novels are characterised by tighter plotting than Doyle's, and together with these developments in form, a more specialist reading public developed. Ronald Knox' decalogue of rules for detective fiction, which I used in my discussion of the genre in my first chapter, was written in the middle of this period, in 1929. Knox' rules were developed based on a perception that mysteries should be solved based on textual clues, not arcane knowledge or *deus ex machina* introductions, such as twin brothers or obscure poisons. The connection between interwar Droodiana and the "golden age" detective stories may not be immediately apparent: it is not founded in a reading of *Edwin Drood* as conforming to the genre characteristics of these stories.[170] Rather, the connection lies in the shared expectation of coherence: the speculation-writer enacts the role of the detective, attempting to unravel the complex background stories which would explain the events in the narrative.

While the repeated and unresolved debates over the preceding decades had weakened the early perception that a solution to the enigmas of the novel was possible, the interwar speculations attempt to reintroduce the possibility of this certainty by producing an ever greater coherence and interconnection between plot points. The Ellery Queen "Challenge to the Reader" is particularly interesting in the context of Kavanagh's speculation, written a decade earlier; it contains the following prefatory remark on the page facing the title page:

> Edwin Drood is the cleverest detective story ever written. Study the clue that Dickens hid in his fascinating story and then try to work out the conclusion yourself.

[170]Knight notes that these novels tended to have a socially and geographically enclosed setting (where the killer is conventionally of the same social position as his victim, and where there are few professional criminals), where detection is rational and has a strong focus on circumstantial evidence (Knight 2003:78); the most obvious difference between the readings of *Edwin Drood* and the detective stories of this period would be the use of multiple suspects. In no period does this reflect the Droodian perception of *Edwin Drood*, and while the description might apply more comfortably to the question of the identity of Datchery, that is not particularly characteristic of this period.

> What became of Edwin? Was he killed? If so, how? And who killed him? Jasper or Neville?
>
> Or did he survive? What did Datchery, the detective, discover? Who *was* Datchery?
>
> *In this edition* of Dickens' mystery masterpiece, the solution is given. When you have thought out the clues yourself to the point where Dickens laid down his pen, read on, and the mystery will be cleared up in an ingenious and satisfying explanation. (Kavanagh 1922a)

Whether this introduction was created by the producers as a marketing ploy or by Kavanagh herself is unknown, but it clearly indicates an awareness of *Edwin Drood*'s lack of resolution as a potential selling point, whereas in Proctor's view this lacuna threatened to detract from the text's interest to prospective readers; it recognises that transformation of the mystery from a source of frustration to one of interest is closely tied to the promise of an authoritative final solution, which it claims to provide. A number of assumptions prevalent in Droodiana are here made explicit as intrinsic attributes of the novel: it is not only a "detective story", but "the cleverest … ever written", a declaration which follows the logic of Proctor and Walters quite closely. It goes further than Droodiana in general, however, in the declaration that Dickens "hid" clues up to the point where he "laid down his pen". The language suggests an author's intention to challenge the reader to figure out what happened; it does not suggest that the lack of an ending is an unfortunate result of the untimely death of the author. Finally, the declaration that "the solution is given", and that "the mystery will be cleared up" suggests unequivocality and authority. In short, the treatment of the fragment is reminiscent of what one would expect of a completed text which has been intentionally framed as a riddle with the solution to be given at the end. It calls for the reader to speculate in the vein of Droodiana, but in addition it promises an authoritative solution at the end of it: Kavanagh herself declares that while the many

contradictory speculations might give the impression that it is impossible to find a satisfactory solution to the mystery, "[t]his point of view is … a mistaken one. The story of Edwin Drood is far advanced enough to furnish all or most of the clues necessary to its complete solution" (Kavanagh 1922b:261). As such, it is similar to the "scientific" results of Proctor or the "mathematical certainty" of Walters and Saunders. Kavanagh, of course, has no greater authority than any other speculation-writer, and she is not alone in turning to increased interconnections in the text and an Oriental backstory in an attempt to remedy this.

Félix Aylmer's theory follows in the footsteps of Kavanagh. It is again the Oriental connection that provides the backdrop for his theory, which he began to develop in two articles in *The Dickensian* in 1924 and 1925 (Cf. Aylmer 1924; Aylmer 1925). The final, elaborate version of this theory was not published until 40 years later, in *The Drood Case* (1964), but the central tenet of his argument remains the same throughout and is remarkable in its break with the earlier Droodian tradition. Regardless of the differences within Droodian speculation, what most could agree on was that Jasper was, in the words of Edwin Charles, "a truly awful man" (Charles 1908:68); Aylmer, however, set out to read the unfinished text in such a way as to arrive at an interpretation that went counter to the common understanding:

> I learned that … while the book was only half-finished, no-one could be in any doubt about the guilt of the accused [John Jasper], though certain details of the story were obscure. Now mystery stories are many and various, but there is one rule of construction common to them all: the cat must not be let out of the bag until near the end, or the suspense which sustains the interest of the tale will be lost. Armed with this facile generalisation, I offered to wager that the general opinion must be wrong; and was told to read the book and see. Thus I came to my first reading with a preconceived opinion and a case to defend. (Aylmer 1964:1-2)

The by now familiar understanding that mystery stories will set out to deceive its readers, and the belief that *Edwin Drood* is such a mystery story, is here made explicit; and the assumption that the novel will conform to the requirements of a coherently plotted mystery forms the foundation for Aylmer's whole theory. He seizes on a detail early in the plot, that Jasper is said to always have a look of devotion on his face when looking at his nephew, and from this he proceeds to read the rest of the text against the grain, having concluded that "essential facts are being withheld" (Aylmer 1964:29): Jasper must be innocent, as the notion of Jasper having a look of devotion on his face while strangling Edwin and pushing him into the quicklime is too absurd (Aylmer 1964:8, 14).[171] From this base, in order to provide an explanation for Jasper's apparently sinister actions, Aylmer develops an elaborate Egyptian back story for the Drood family, in which several minor characters are involved and connected.[172]

Aylmer's theory is based in an extreme interpretation of the common claim that "everything is meaningful" in the fragment. He takes the position that the narrator's words must be absolute truth, and that any theory that contradicts any clear assertion by the narrator must therefore be false. Holding as an indisputable fact that Jasper is a benevolent force in the life of his nephew, Aylmer is compelled to

[171]The relevant quote from *Edwin Drood* is the following: "Once for all, a look of intentness and intensity – a look of hungry, exacting, watchful, and yet devoted affection – is always, now and ever afterwards, on the Jasper face whenever the Jasper face is addressed in this direction. And whenever it is so addressed, it is never, on this occasion or any other, dividedly addressed; it is always concentrated" (Dickens 1982:6-7). Aylmer concludes that if Forster's plot outline is correct, then "we are to see him [Jasper] piling spadeful after spadeful of quicklime on the unfortunate Edwin, while still wearing that expression of hungry, exacting, watchful and yet devoted affection" (Aylmer 1964:8).

[172]The Opium Woman may serve as an example: she is taken to be Jasper's grandmother, the mother of an Egyptian muslim woman who had some sort of liaison with Jasper's father (who in Aylmer's reading is Mr Drood, Edwin's father). According to Aylmer, Mr Drood would have killed the father (of the muslim woman, who would then be the husband of the Opium Woman) in order to prevent an "honour killing", thereby sparking a blood feud which threatens Edwin Drood. Aylmer, in addition, makes the Opium Woman an English woman by birth because he believes the contrast between the rules on marriage (a muslim man may marry an English woman, but a muslim woman cannot marry an English man) would have appealed to Dickens.

construct an elaborate suppositional plot from other details in the narrative, ending up with a story in which Edwin's life is threatened by a vendetta incurred by his father in Egypt, and against which he is only protected through his engagement to Rosa, entered into by their parents for this very purpose. In so doing, he draws on very different points in the text compared to earlier (and later) Droodiana. This includes very close readings of the description of Jasper, as in the already quoted section on "the Jasper face", but also a greater attention to for example the relevance of the childhood engagement between Rosa and Edwin. He also draws extensively on orientalist authorities like Edward Lane or J. L. Burckhardt, which he sometimes reads in tandem with Dickens' text.

Aylmer's theory, like the more conventional ones of Proctor, Walters and Lang, is an articulation of the expectation of *peripeteia*. It enables him to set up an opposition between "our informed minds" (those who subsume the narrative to the detail) and "his more credulous readers" (those who subsume the detail to the narrative) (Aylmer 1964:10). This is recognisable as yet another version of Proctor's arguments of "ordinary" versus "thoughtful" readers. Like Kavanagh and those of the preceding period, Aylmer builds on this assumption, but the plot lines which have already been made explicit by earlier speculations now all appear too "obvious", and therefore can only serve as the misdirection, not as the true enigma. The central tenet for Aylmer is that "essential facts are being withheld" (Aylmer 1964:29), and that one detail can cancel out all that the text would seem to suggest, because the aim of the narrative is to deceive the reader. The basis for this is the desire for a disconfirmation followed by consonance, already expressed in the vast majority of Droodian

speculations; but here the search for coherence takes the extreme forms of what might be termed hyperconnectivity, in which an inordinate number of characters turn out to be related to or otherwise connected to each other before the start of the narrative, as well as a need to make all parts of the text fit the theory.[173]

Aylmer argues that

> [t]hough certain details of the plot are either perfunctory or borrowed, conoisseurs of crime stories will recognise his development of various literary and logical devices which may rank as "clues" of an original type. The unfinished sentences of which we are tempted to ignore the conclusion; the general principles which are never at hand when wanted; the pseudo-syllogism which invites a false conclusion; the inadequate evidence which is worse than no evidence at all; the statement deliberately confused so that its purport may be missed by the lazy; the false opinion accepted from an incompetent witness: all these are traps for the unwary reader which become, at one remove, clues to the truth when seen for what they are. (Aylmer 1964:177)

Aylmer's "clues" here are very close to Barthes' later description of the operations of the hermeneutic code. The "unfinished sentences" are identifiable as a form of "suspended answer", as are the "general principles", whereas the "pseudo-syllogism", the "statement deliberately confused" and the "false opinion accepted from an incompetent witness" are examples of what Barthes would call "false clues" or "misdirections". Aylmer's method can therefore be seen as an attempt to read the hermeneutic code "at one remove": identifying the strategies that the text employs in order to delay the revelation of the enigma, and then reasoning from this to what might be hidden by these attempts. This, in principle, is no different from what earlier

[173]For example, Crisparkle's "memorable walk" to the Weir, which leads him to find Drood's discarded jewellery, is taken as evidence that Drood is alive because of "Dickens's care to inform us that 'the preoccupation of his mind … hindered him from … taking heed of the objects that he passed' but that, when conscious perception of his surroundings returned, with the sound of the Weir he found a name in his mind: evidently that of Edwin Drood" (Aylmer 1964:160). Aylmer concludes that Crisparkle must have passed the living Drood on the way. Another remarkable example of this type of hyperconnective argument can be found in Wilmot Corfield, who has Neville, Helena, Jasper, Princess Puffer and Edwin all be related to each other; Datchery is himself, but is also played by Neville and Helena (Corfield 1913).

Droodian speculation had done, and his reference to traps for the "unwary reader" (and its implicit designation of Aylmer as a "wary" reader), mirrors the earlier oppositions between naive and sophisticated readers often set up in speculations. However, if the "golden age" speculations can be classed as elaborate examples of the potential progress of the "readerly" approach, which sets out to make sense of the narrative as it appears (following a path of least resistance between the points of explicit information while still allowing for the conditions set down by the expectation of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*), then Aylmer's approach is more reminiscent of the "writerly" reading in Pierre Bayard's *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong*, discussed in my first chapter.[174] He employs the same suspicion with regard to what is not explicitly stated; however, like the rest of Droodiana, he does it, not in light of the ending (like Bayard does), but in order to arrive at the ending in the first place. The difference between the two is significant. One, Bayard, is relying on the coherence of the authorial text; the other, Aylmer, is pushing the possibilities of the unfinished text. Aymer has rarely been taken as the final word on *Edwin Drood*. But not all Droodian interwar speculations have been as easily dismissed.

Howard Duffield's[175] article "John Jasper – Strangler", published in 1930, was perhaps the most influential of the interwar speculations, especially if seen outside the particular field of Droodiana. Cox calls the essay "a strong one and essential to any study of the novel"; Walters declared it "irrefutable" (Walters 1930); and Edmund Wilson, in what purports to be a scholarly reading of *Edwin Drood* in 1940, takes

[174]The label "readerly" is in itself problematic, as I have shown how the reading process illustrated by Droodian speculation is no passive consumption of a text, but the active, productive construction of potential plots. I have used it here in order to illustrate a degree of innovation rather than an absolute measure.

[175]Cox gives his full name as George Howard Duffield (Cox 1998:xxix). Only "Howard Duffield" is given in the article, however.

Duffield's essay as proof to build a reading on (Wilson 1942).[176] Here, as in both Kavanagh and Aylmer, the Oriental aspect was central to the enigma of the proposed plot: Duffield's article argues that Jasper was a Thug, a worshipper of Kali, who murdered his nephew as a ritual offering to the goddess. My interest in Duffield is not unrelated to the popularity of his theory: its surprising ability to convince despite perhaps being, as Philip Collins claims, "one of the many theories about *Edwin Drood* which deserve to be cut off by a literary Occam's Razor" (Collins 1962:301), rests on its skilful balance between the extremes of Aylmer and Kavanagh. Like them Duffield observes the many references to opium and Empire, and concludes that "[i]t becomes quickly apparent that the clue to the rôle for which Jasper is cast must be sought in Oriental antecedents" (Duffield 1930:582). Duffield's theory is based in the general consensus that Jasper is a villain; but because of the centrality of opium in the text's establishment of his character, it assumes that this must have some function in the plot.

Like Aylmer and Kavanagh, moreover, Duffield assumes that the missing ending would have revealed the motivation of current actions in an elaborate backstory preceding the present of the narrative: "Concerning the background of John Jasper, who occupies the center of the stage, Dickens intentionally left the reader in

[176]Wilson claims that "It did not, it is true, become possible to gauge the full significance of the novel until certain key discoveries had been made in regard to the plot itself" (Wilson 1942:84). He also claims that "Mr. Duffield has here shown conclusively that Jasper is supposed to be a member of the Indian sect of Thugs" (Wilson 1942:85), that Aubrey Boyd has shown "that Jasper is also a hypnotist" (Wilson 1942:89). He also supports the dual personality idea (Wilson 1942:92) and claims that "It has already been established by Cuming Walters - it was the first of the important discoveries about Drood - that Datchery, the mysterious character who comes to Cloisterham to spy on Jasper, is Helena in disguise" (Wilson 1942:93). This approach to Droodian theories was discussed by Robert Barnard in his *Imagery and Theme in the Novels of Dickens* (1971), in which he wrote that "Droodians seem very frequently not to be Dickensians; and unfortunately many Dickensians are not Droodians, and carelessly assume as proved theories which research has shown are far from tenable" (Barnard 1971:238)

ignorance. . . . With sedulous care he [Dickens] kept out of the story everything which might disclose its central secret" (Duffield 1930:582). Duffield is not alone in claiming that any absence of information in the text can be explained by the hermeneutic code's need to keep the enigma suspended: by assuming that the lack of a backstory is a strategy of avoidance, Duffield reasons in much the same way as Aylmer and those who preceded him, arguing that the absence of information in itself is an indication of a place where the enigma should be sought. Moreover, Duffield also locates this backstory in the East, drawing on the promise of a sinister danger which the Oriental suggests, in the tradition analysed by Said.

Duffield's most telling argument is his evaluation of Fildes' evidence that Dickens had informed him Jasper would strangle Drood with his neckcloth:

> That this ample "neckcloth" was central to Dickens's thought is cried aloud by Fildes's letter. The insisted substitution of that long black scarf, for the "little black tie"; his anxiety, lest he might let into the open the very idea which he was so strenuously concealing; his brooding silence; his deliberate weighing of the situation; his exaction of the pledge of absolute secrecy; his stressing the pivotal relation to the narrative, of Jasper's neck-gear – "I *must* have the double tie. It is *necessary*" – his explanation that Jasper is to *strangle* Drood with it, form a combination of circumstances which proclaim with cumulative emphasis that Fildes's inquiry went, like a probe, close to the heart of the "Mystery". (Duffield 1930:583, Duffield's emphasis)

The information Duffield draws on here, Fildes' story of how Dickens told him why he needed the double neck tie, is not new information at this point: Fildes had revealed it in an article in *The Dickensian* already in 1905. What makes Duffield's use of it significant is the shift in the interpretation of the episode, which illustrates the development of speculation in this third period. Whereas the first group of Droodian speculation assumed that Dickens would have wanted to keep suspended the question of whether (and how) Drood was in fact murdered by his uncle, this question is not

even taken into account as a possible enigma by Duffield. This is not because he is unaware of the issue.[177] Quite to the contrary, I believe the new interpretation stems from a feeling that the old enigmas had lost their power to surprise and therefore satisfy: whereas the question of Drood's survival formed the main point of contention between Proctor, Walters and Lang, this enigma is by Duffield considered too obvious to warrant Dickens' hesitation; there is a perception that there must be more to it.

This is an indication that Forster's authority, with its support from Fildes, Perugini and Dickens Jr., has won out against the dissenting view of Proctor and Lang. In its place, Duffield finds a clue to a deeper enigma in Fildes' revelation: Dickens' words, he suggests, do not serve to reveal the enigma to Fildes; they only function as indicators, or clues, to the enigma. Duffield reads Fildes' extra-textual contribution as if it were intra-textual: he subsumes it under the reading of the hermeneutic code. And this in turn forms the basis for the new understanding of the enigma, which he then proceeds to resolve by making Jasper a Thug. Duffield apparently reads the Droodian tradition itself as if it were part of the genre of the "whodunnit".

While these three speculations only form a small portion of the Droodian production of the interwar years, they are important representatives of the new developments of the period. This development springs out of an impatience with the old arguments and a dismissal of the old enigmas as unsatisfactory; as a consequence it looks for the enigma in new places. This takes the form, in part, of a use of the Orient as a location for that enigma, based in the Orient's connotations of mystery, but it also makes use of a different approach to the reading of the hermeneutic code of the

[177]Duffield was an avid collector of *Edwin Drood* materials. Cox notes that when the collection was displayed in 1932, it filled a room in The Grolier Club in New York (at the time it contained 450 items). In 1938 it was donated to the Dickens House Museum (Cox 1998:xxix).

unfinished narrative. In Kavanagh, especially, this takes the form of an attempt to connect the various characters to each other, a trait which Aylmer also shows to a lesser extent. The tendency to view the debates at one remove, however, is most clearly shown in the interpretation of *Edwin Drood* which places Dickens' text in the context of earlier speculations, and reads the whole as a unity which conforms to the genre expectations of the "whodunnit": earlier speculations and extra-textual information provided by witnesses close to Dickens are treated as blinds and false clues which direct attention away from the "true" enigma. As such, this new generation of speculations shows both a continuity, in their adoption of the premise that *Edwin Drood* should conform to the structure of the mystery novel, but also a significant departure from the earlier periods in its strategies for resolution. Droodian speculation builds on itself, and this third period builds on the preceding, in part by reading the history of Droodian speculation itself as part of the text to be interpreted.

5.4 The alternative genres

As this chapter has shown, the mystery posed by the unfinished text is at the heart of the Droodian enterprise, and the assumption that *Edwin Drood* should be read as a mystery novel is integral to the vast majority of Droodian speculations. Approaching the text as one dominated by the hermeneutic code, they search for evidence of false clues and true clues, piecing them together to arrive at a plausible ending. Because the hermeneutic code is primarily focused by the ending, however, and because the unfinished text lacks such an ending to confirm a reading, the expectation that *Edwin Drood* would conform to the genre expectations of the "whodunnit" is very much an

assumption, not a confirmed and indisputable quality of the text as it stands. It is not surprising that this assumption has formed such a central part of the majority of Droodian speculations, however, precisely because, as the opening section of this chapter and the second chapter of my thesis have shown, this assumption is one of the causes of Droodian speculation itself: the "whodunnit" genre produces the impression that the solution (and therefore the ending) could be arrived at by the attentive reader before the enigma is revealed in the end; reading *Edwin Drood* as a text dominated by this code will therefore provide an incentive for speculation (and for sharing one's understanding of the plot with the world at large), which other understandings of the text may not. It does not follow, however, that this is necessarily the only form of Droodian reading, or that there is a consensus that *Edwin Drood* should in fact be read as a mystery novel or a "whodunnit".

A minority of commenters on *Edwin Drood* have rejected the mystery genre assignation of the novel from the beginning (as for example Edwards, discussed on page 201), but alternative readings appear with greater frequency in the post-war period. This is especially true from the 1970s onwards. I remarked on the Droodian tendency to diverge rather than arrive at a consensus earlier in this chapter, and one can begin to trace this tendency in the developments discussed so far in the increasingly diverging plots: the early Droodians primarily differed in the questions of the identity of Datchery and whether Jasper had succeeded in killing his nephew, but on the whole stuck to the manipulation of the explicit elements of the text itself in their search for a solution that would provide a satisfying ending, and were generally agreed that Jasper had sinister intentions; the interwar speculations departed from this

pattern in their willingness to look beyond the information in the text itself and make use of the gaps in the text to include elaborate backstories (or even rehabilitate Jasper). Despite their willingness to introduce these new plot lines, however, the interwar speculations still adhered to the "golden decade" premise that the purpose was to work out the surprising ending to Dickens' story; and the primary impetus of their speculations was still to find a mystery worthy of Dickens' final novel. The type of speculation I will look at in this section takes this willingness to diverge one step further by putting the fragment's genre itself into question. This is done, either by replacing it with another genre classification or through a parodic treatment of the Droodian project as a whole. Rather than accept the premise that Dickens set out to provide a narrative dominated by the hermeneutic code, with the attendant red herrings, clues and revelations that have been discussed so far in this chapter, these writers demonstrate the possibility of reading *Edwin Drood* with different expectations, and using patterns other than the hermeneutic structure of the "whodunnit" to make sense of the text. This is not a development into the discovery of one new genre, but consists in a variety of departures from and interactions with the assumptions of earlier Droodiana.

The first of these approaches has roots in the early reactions to the novel: we have seen it in Edwards, who in his confrontation with Proctor is a significant early example of Droodiana. In the postwar period something approaching Edwards' reading can be found again in Philip Collins' *Dickens and Crime* (1962), where he argues that while Dickens might have included a mystery (like the identity of Datchery) to keep his readers' interest up, the main focus of the novel would have

been a study of what the narrator in *Edwin Drood* calls the "horrible wonder apart" (Dickens 1982:176): the criminal mind.[178] *Edwin Drood*, in this reading, is a psychological novel, more closely related to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* than it is to Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. It is significant that this reading comes as the culmination of a comprehensive study of Dickens and crime, in which *Edwin Drood* is presented as the capstone: to back up this claim, Collins traces a tendency in Dickens' writings, in which the criminal element in Dickens' books develop from grotesque underworld creatures like Fagin and Sikes into increasingly middle class members of society like Bradley Headstone (a schoolmaster), and culminating in Jasper (a lay precentor and music teacher). This reading gives Collins no reason to question Forster's plot outline, and he is quite willing to accept his authority: Jasper's guilt is central to Collins' thesis; and the psychological novel is not a genre which requires the inclusion of the peripateic twist which Forster's plot lacks.

Having rejected the pattern of *peripeteia/anagnorisis* as a foundation for the exegesis of Dickens' novel, Collins replaces it with another authority: continuity within Dickens' authorial project. In particular, he argues in favour of his reading of *Edwin Drood* by drawing an analogy with *Our Mutual Friend*:

> the Harmon Murder is the mystery on everyone's lips . . . . This is a silly and trivial mystery, but fortunately Dickens could feel that he had thus done his duty in providing the obligatory 'mystery' element for this novel. He can then treat Bradley Headstone's murderous attempt more seriously and internally, as a psychological study and not a whodunnit. . . . Jasper has killed Edwin, and we are never intended to doubt it, and . . . the 'mysteries' elsewhere in the novel are of less interest than the psychology of the known murderer (Collins 1962:284)

The fact that Dickens, in Collins' reading of *Our Mutual Friend*, has used the mystery

[178]It may be relevant in this context that Collins is writing as an academic, and his book on the subject is an academic study of Dickens. There is therefore a different incentive for working out the genre and plot of the novel, which replaces the genre-founded one of a search for *anagnorisis*.

element of the story only in order to capture the reader's attention and keep them reading while the study of the murderer was conducted, is taken as an indication that he would do so again; the rationale behind Collins' use of the continuity argument is recognisable as equivalent to that introduced by Proctor's discussion of Dickens' "favourite theme". The difference lies in that where Proctor proposes the repetition of one plot structure (the villain being closely observed by a person he does not believe poses a threat), Collins finds the continuity in the development of a concern with the description of a particular type of character: the murderer. There is a greater emphasis on evolution and change in Collins' argument, compared to that of Proctor; but this change is confined to the steadily clearer articulation of one concern within one authorial project: the instability in the variety of texts is neutralised by reference to the development and maturation of Dickens' treatment of one topic. And the unfinished text is first interpreted in light of this perceived tendency, and then in turn taken as confirmation of it.

As the continuity in Dickens' work is the central support of Collins' understanding of the plot, the discontinuity he finds in other Droodian speculations is used to dismiss them as implausible:

> Attempts to find plot-significance in every phrase of a novelist, the unmistakable mark of whose writing is, as Orwell says, 'the *unnecessary detail*,' seems to me as misguided as the common assumption that Dickens was here trying to emulate so different a novelist as Wilkie Collins, by making the solution of a mystery the central interest, instead of one of several secondary interests, in a novel. Nor need we assume that everything in the fragment we have is perfect in its placing and relevance, or that Dickens was, for once, going to write a novel with a perfect plot. The completed novel might well have contained as many loose ends and imperfections as usual. Plot was, certainly, to have been more important here than usual, but Dickens rarely made the plot in itself the effective centre of interest in his fiction. (Collins 1962:290)

Collins' argument here is based in the understanding that Dickens' final novel would have been "Dickensian", that it would have continued in the style that had made Dickens famous (the style that a number of the completions discussed in my third chapter mimicked): and in doing so he advocates the rejection of the demand for plot significance and coherence in favour of the "unnecessary detail". This is in line with my discussion of Foucault's author-function in my previous chapter: there is in this reading a clear idea of what counts as "Dickensian", and how it differs from the writings of Wilkie Collins and other detective story writers. It is possible, then, to see similar concerns in speculations as those displayed in reactions to, and writings of, the completions: the author serves as a principle of unity, and remains the guarantor of the "correct" ending.

Like Collins, Ray Dubberke, in *Dickens, Drood and the Detectives* (1992) also rejects the Droodian project of treating the novel as a solvable riddle, pointing out that "[i]t is a fallacy to suppose that all the clues Dickens intended to include have already been presented in the half-finished novel. On the contrary, he had plenty of time to plant additional pointers as the story progressed" (Dubberke 1992:51). Where Collins chose to replace the authority of genre convention with that of continuity within an authorial project, Dubberke reaches outside the author/work context for his authority; he arrives at that which Walters nearly 80 years earlier had hoped would solve the problem: an appeal to judicial authority. Dubberke's approach is different from that of the Dickens Fellowship trial, however. Rather than attempt to decide the guilt question through the judicial process itself, he chooses as his premise that Dickens' unravelling of the murder must be strong enough to stand up in a court of law. This

leads him to the conclusion that Datchery should therefore be a detective. In his evaluation of the alternative candidates for Datchery he dismisses the elaborate arguments for one or the other of the Landlesses as the one set to confront Jasper and provoke his confession:

> If it was Neville Landless in the tomb, his testimony is of no value whatever to the prosecution. Because he is himself a major suspect, anything he says can be construed as an attempt to conceal his own guilt. . . . As for Helena Landless, the defence need only point out that Neville's sister would do anything necessary to vindicate her brother. (Dubberke 1992:106)

It therefore becomes necessary to bring in someone from outside this circle of characters if Jasper is to be convicted.

Dubberke's theory rejects the earlier trends in Droodian speculation (and completions) in favour of an alternative emphasis: realism rather than effect. He observes that

> [the] most important reason why critics deride the professional-detective theory is their unspoken and perhaps unconscious conviction that if Datchery is a new character then his identity is hopelessly undiscoverable, and that as a result The Mystery must remain forever unsolved. Therefore they insist on applying to Edwin Drood one of the rules of the modern whodunit: namely that the party whose identity is being sought (usually the murderer, but in Drood, Datchery) has to be one of a group of potential suspects previously introduced into the story. But there is absolutely no evidence that Dickens followed this rule[.] (Dubberke 1992:50)

Dubberke, then, still considers Datchery's identity to be central to the plot's development, but he rejects the coherence-based demand that Datchery be identified as one of the characters already introduced. Likewise, he accepts the authority of Forster, Fildes and other external sources; even going further than these in identifying a historical individual as the inspiration for the character: Stephen Thornton, featured

in an article in Dickens' *Household Words* (Dubberke 1992:20).[179] But it is significant that the basis for this identification is the an event in Dickens' life, his earlier writing on the subject of Scotland Yard detectives and the analogy to *Bleak House*'s Mr Bucket (Dubberke 1992:4). Judicial authority, here as in my discussion of Stevenson on page 99, is not left to carry the burden of evidence alone, and even Dubberke's speculation relies on the recurring focus of Droodian tradition: Dickens as author and as a unifying and explanatory force. Dubberke achieves this by establishing the author's awareness of and interest in the professional detective in his non-fictional writing, and then by providing an example of the use of that interest in his fiction in the creation of a figure whose similarity to Datchery is stressed. This allows Dubberke to connect his historical and judicial facts to the author, thereby establishing the plausibility of this as Dickens' creative intention.

The same combination of a departure from the traditional form of speculation, while still retaining the reliance on a continuity within Dickens' writing, can be found in John Thacker's *Antichrist in the Cathedral* (1990). Thacker eschews the murder mystery focus because it "will probably never be solved. If by some freak discovery they [the various mysteries] were, it is not very likely that the reputation of Dickens as a novelist would be much enhanced" (Thacker 1990:13). The rejection of the *peripeteia*-based speculations is here based in the very motive that prompted Proctor's introduction of them in the first place: the desire to defend Dickens' reputation as a novelist. But where Proctor argued that the *plot* would have to be something more than the stright-forward murder, Thacker is arguing that the novel as a whole would

[179]Thornton, Dubberke claims, was a detective in the newly formed Detective Police, discussed in the *Household Words* article "Detective Police" under the name Dornton (Dickens 1850).

have to be something *more* than a plot: "Never since the days of his first real novel (*Oliver Twist*, 1837-38) had Dickens been known to offer his readers a story without some underlying social comment as part of the tapestry. I see no reason why he should suddenly discard the method and manner of a lifetime and write a sensational pot-boiler" (Thacker 1990:16). This is yet another version of the continuity-argument, but where Orwell traced the particularly "Dickensian" in the unnecessary detail, Proctor thought he had identified a "favourite theme", and Collins found continuity in a preoccupation with the criminal mind, Thacker finds the defining feature of Dickens' writing in the concern with social commentary and its articulation around a central image (like the fog in *Bleak House*, the Marshalsea Prison in *Little Dorrit* and the river in *Our Mutual Friend*). More specifically, Thacker expects that *Edwin Drood*

> would in the end be seen to have had a single overriding motif or theme which, in the emphasis given to it throughout the book, would dominate the whole tone and would have been in the author's mind from the start. I am convinced that for *Edwin Drood* this master-theme is the Cathedral. (Thacker 1990:118)

One of Walters' arguments in favour of a plot in which Edwin is murdered by Jasper (discussed on page 212) was that "No author who understands his craft loads his work with unnecessary details. No one erects a stupendous fabric if it is to remain empty" (Walters 1905:40). Walters' concern was with what he saw as the hints and clues of the enigma; but while Thacker has dismissed the enigma itself as of little interest, the argument of the "stupendous fabric" remains in this focus on the unifying theme. Thacker, like the other speculation-writers discussed in this chapter, is as concerned with the unity of the text as he is with the continuity of Dickens' authorship. The difference is that he looks for that unity in yet another perception of the particularly "Dickensian": in a consistency of themes and motifs with social criticism. Based on

this he expects the social commentary to focus on the shortcomings of the Anglican Church:

> The symbolism here is that Edwin is to lie concealed and corrupting in an ancient Cathedral, which has itself become corrupt with the passing of time, in that its original purpose, the leading of people in the worship of God through the Christian faith, has been forgotten, covered up by a heap of rituals … which have become largely meaningless and are therefore being carelessly observed. But on the body of Drood is an indestructible jewel, and in the heart of the Cathedral lies an equally indestructible truth, each awaiting resurrection. (Thacker 1990:22)

Thacker's aim here is to provide a wider reading of the fragment, in which the plot is merely one aspect of the wider landscape. It is worth noting, however, that while this reading is not primarily aimed at working out the plot, it cannot avoid the necessity of positing an understanding of the murder mystery. Thacker's image relies on the rotting corpse of Edwin Drood being hidden in the Cathedral, an idea which springs out of his reading of precisely the plot which had been the central concern of those preceding him, and he cannot avoid taking a stand in relation to that controversy.

The readings of Collins, Dubberke and Thacker set out to bring closure to the debate itself by rejecting the premise that had dominated it. In these newer speculations, the aim is not so much the sense of *anagnorisis* as a result of a coherent plot outline; instead, these speculations set out to provide an end to the meta-mystery of what *Edwin Drood* is or would have been, and the coherence is sought primarily in Dickens' authorship as a whole. Having abandoned the strict genre requirements of the mystery novel, they have replaced it with an alternative authority, and the primary authority they have turned to is consistently the perceived unity of Dickens' authorial project, which they attempt to ground in a continuation between the texts he has

written and the one he would have written had he lived.[180] Significantly, they all accept Forster's plot outline (which even those whose *anagnorisis*-based speculations centred on the identity of Datchery have generally seen as incomplete): the original rejection of Forster sprang out of a perception that it did not provide a satisfying twist; but when the genre of the novel is no longer expected to provide such a twist, the authority of Forster is no longer challenged. However, not all postwar speculations follow this pattern.

A very useful example can be found in Benny R. Reece's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood Solved* (1989), which, in its departure from the unstated Droodian premise of the reliance on the unifying factors of the author and the coherence of the text, serves to highlight their importance: as Aylmer's declaration of Jasper's innocence served to show how much earlier Droodians agreed on, Reece's declaration that Dickens, knowing he would die, wrote *Edwin Drood* in such a way that it could be deciphered as a *roman à clef* by consulting Greek mythology, helps underscore the concerns which Collins, Dubberke and Thacker share with earlier Droodiana. Reece's text itself would seem to be grounded in the desire to protect Dickens' aftermath, which I have already traced from the very beginning of Droodian speculation to its more recent articulation in Thacker's study: Reece stridently rejects the productions of preceding Droodiana because "[h]ad Dickens intended to write such garbage, he

[180]There are many more such readings of *Edwin Drood*. A.D.'s article on "The Tendency of Dickens's Works" (1885), read all of Dickens under the theme of philanthropy, extrapolating on what this must mean for the possible plot of *Edwin Drood*. A.O.J. Cockshut's chapter "*Edwin Drood*: Early and Late Dickens" in *Dickens and the Twentieth Century* (1962) argues that *Edwin Drood* forms a synthesis of the early Dickens with the later, under the main theme of dying European culture. Warrington Winters' "*Edwin Drood*; The Pursuers and the Pursued" (1963) is a biographical reading, arguing that Dickens had been pursued as a child, and was therefore obsessed with the motif of the pursued child. The article portrays Jasper as pursuing five orphans, but reversing the motif in having Deputy pursue Jasper in his turn.

would have produced a detective story without a mystery in the plot, and garbage it is – thousands of pages of it" (Reece 1989:xiv). But while Reece's claim might suggest that he is among those who read the book as a mystery story, this is not the case. Reece argues that the real mystery is not *in* the text, but is created by the existence of the text itself: *Edwin Drood*, he claims, is a puzzle designed by an author who had no intention of completing it (and which can therefore be seen as already finished), made to be deciphered by a reader who could identify the clues pointing him towards Greek mythology. Based on this assumption, Reece forces Dickens' text to adopt the complicated family and intrigue patterns of the Olympic pantheon, making it necessary to conclude that Helena (as Artemis) killed Drood (as Orion) because he tried to rape her. Still according to this logic, Honeythunder (Zeus), Tartar (Poseidon) and Durdles (Pluto) are brothers; and Rosa (Eos) is romantically involved with Datchery, Drood, Grewgious and Joe (the omnibus driver), in what Reece describes as a "frankly lewd" romantic subplot (Reece 1989:46).

Reece's plot does not make use of the arguments that earlier Droodians have relied on: there is no attempt to place *Edwin Drood* as a part of a unity of Dickens' authorship; nor does it rely on the internal coherence, or consonance, of the plot, themes or characters. Instead it relies wholly on the support of an outside authority, the pattern of Greek and Roman mythology, which is justified only through the erratic process of choosing names, appearances or even a character's paraphernalia or living situation (but rarely more than one of these) which could tie him or her to a character in Ancient Greek or Roman mythology. Because it breaks with the expectations generally created by the narrative to such an unusual extent, and manages to run

counter to what could be expected from Dickens, both as an established Victorian writer and based on his earlier novels, in addition to its break with character coherence, this attempt to confer wholeness on a plot from an outside authority becomes especially visible. It displays the violence in the attempt to restrict and determine the fragment through reference to an authority without the softening effect of an apparently "natural" link like the use of the author-function or genre qualities. As such, it is useful as an illustration of the way an unfinished narrative like *Edwin Drood* is particularly vulnerable to reductive treatment that imposes a secondary pattern in order to make sense of it, precisely because such readings have the unusual liberty of being able to impose the ending that best suit their own purpose.[181] Even in its break with the traditional reading of the fragment, however, Reece's understanding itself finds its justification in the authorial creative intention, as a riddle posed by Dickens to his readers.

5.5 Conclusion

Through an analysis of the historical development of the Droodian phenomenon, this chapter has shown how Droodian speculation develops from the assumption that one plot outline is self-evident, through a confrontation with an authoritative source, and towards an increasing awareness of the need to justify a diverging position based in some other form of authority. It has shown how the speculations display an increasing preoccupation with disconfirmation and consonance, which is in accordance with the genre qualities of the formal detective story, as I discussed it in my first chapter. It has

[181] One example of such readings can be found in Leonard F. Manheim's *Hidden Patterns: Studies in Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism* (1966), which, drawing on Duffield and others reads Jasper as a Kali-worshipper and thereby an extension of Dickens' death drive (the desire for his own death, having already assigned the desire to kill and the desire to be killed in earlier books).

also shown how Droodiana builds on itself and, based in an imperative of originality, produces steadily diverging, "writerly" readings which explore the openings of what starts out as an, in Barthes' terms, "classical" 19th century "readerly" text.

This chapter has thereby shown that without an author to close off the text, it retains a potential for a wide variety of texts. It is not only open to interpretation as it stands (as if it were complete: a sort of Barthesian text with no authorial authority hovering over it), but more so, in that it also comes to include all the possible projected endings imagined by Droodians based in the perceived creative intention of Dickens. The reading process is stopped perpetually in the middle, with no final authority to close off the provisional readings and subsume them under the restrictions of an ending, and there is no authoritative way to finally dismiss one interpretation and endorse another.

This chapter has, moreover, noted recurrent tendencies in Droodian speculation, which highlight some of the unspoken premises of reading: speculations tend to aim towards coherence, consonance and unity, but in their search for this they rely on a variety of authorities; central to the majority of these, however, is the figure of Dickens as author, either as the provider of a literary continuity in which *Edwin Drood* can take its place, or as the guarantor of the unity of the text, as I discussed in my earlier chapters. A central concern is also the desire to do justice to Dickens as author by demonstrating the quality of the writing in presenting a well constructed plot, a thorough development of character or a serious discussion of social problems.

6 Conclusion

COMPLETENESS IS ALL (Lucentini and Fruttero 1992:7).

The title of the fictional conference at the heart of *The D. Case: The Truth About the Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1992) by Franco Lucentini and Carlo Fruttero underscores the ironic tension inherent in Droodiana: the desire for completeness, which has prompted the many attempts to work out or even simply write the ending, and simultaneously the fact that completeness clearly is *not* all, proven precisely by the continued interest in this unfinished novel. Its power of fascination relies precisely on its incompleteness.

The question of what "completeness" itself entails has been at the heart of my thesis. Arthur Conan Doyle's ability to change the ending of the Sherlock Holmes stories retroactively, combined with even a contrarian reading's reliance on the perceived coherence of the text, suggested that while the author may be a problematic figure in the interpretation of texts, our search for meaning in the text generally relies on the perception of the text as a sanctioned whole, and that this sanction is perceived as springing from the author's creative authority. Because the sanctioned text is perceived as a "natural" whole (in Foucault's terms, the culturally produced discourse naturalises and makes invisible its own operations), however, the importance of this authority only really becomes visible when the text is in some way disturbed. Doyle's decision to revive Holmes was one such, but the unfinished serial narrative allowed me to investigate the phenomenon in more detail.

The conference at the heart of *The D. Case*, alongside its "Drood work-group", features attempts to complete other works of art, among them

Schubert's unfinished symphony, the surviving fragment of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Based in the argument of my thesis, there is an important difference between Poe's and Dickens' works: Poe's narrator cuts off abruptly, but the text itself had authorial sanction, whereas Dickens' text and narrative both end before they were intended to. I showed that the very idea of the unfinished text entails a perception that it is only a part of what should have been a greater whole, a perception which itself relies on an authoritative (if not authorial) intention to create more. Moreover, the different reactions to the unfinished works of William Makepeace Thackeray, Robert Louis Stevenson and Charles Dickens confirmed what my analysis of Doyle had suggested: that completeness is perceived as grounded in the author's authority to sanction that whole (which is in accordance with Foucault's fruitful description of what he called the "author-function"). The foundation for Droodiana, and especially Droodian speculation, is that the perceived mystery structure of the novel (and the attendant genre requirement of a disconfirmation followed by consonance) provides the illusion that through careful analysis of the text, the missing authorial plan may be revealed.

The perceived creative authority of the "author" must be distinguished from the notion of an interpretative authority. Rather, it is the foundation for the proliferation of meaning which can result in a host of different readings (it is what distinguishes reading in a "writerly" way from writing itself). When we read, we read in light of an ending; or, as first time readers, we read in light of the anticipated ending, continuously revising our provisional plot constructions in light of new information provided by the text as we encounter it. My analysis of the authorially

unsanctioned completions of *Edwin Drood* showed that readers were unwilling to continue this revision of provisional plots beyond the text written by Dickens (unless they believed the new text was also by Dickens). Just as the speculations which form the main body of Droodian writing are aimed at arriving at Dickens' authorial, and therefore authoritative, plot. Together, these analyses have revealed a clear desire for the authorially sanctioned ending, an expression of the author-function's continuity throughout the period (although there are variations in how this is articulated over time).

The D. Case, rather than being a serious entry into the Droodian debate, functions as a humorous pastiche commentary on the salient traits of Droodiana. The conference, with the full title "COMPLETENESS IS ALL. An International Forum on the Completion of Unfinished or Fragmentary Works in Music and Literature" (Lucentini and Fruttero 1992:7), offers a "Drood work-group" which gathers Hercule Poirot, Porfiry Petrovich, Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown, Philip Marlow, Jules Maigret, Auguste Dupin and other famous detectives, as well as the (fictional) editor of the Dickensian, Dr Wilmot, in order to arrive at the "correct" ending of *Edwin Drood*. As such it continues in the tradition of the Holmesian pastiches which have been part of Droodiana for most of its history, but instead of using the Holmes figure to add authority to one solution, the book celebrates the possibilities open to the unfinished work. This is evident, for example in the use of multiple detectives: instead of the monological aim of many Droodian texts, a multiplicity of voices is presented together.

Each chapter of Dickens' text is presented in-text and subsequently scrutinised

by these fictional detectives, who are also given an impressive overview of the external evidence of Droodiana. It thereby serves to display how each new chapter closes down some avenues of investigation while simultaneously opening new ones, thereby simultaneously suggesting how this closing off and opening up might have continued in the unwritten half. It also accommodates the diverging readings of the novel's genre: the narrator sets up the distinction between "the Porfiry Petrovich[182] school, or the *Porfirians*, who already consider [*Edwin Drood*] to be less a detective novel than a psychological thriller, on account of the opium" and "the Christie School, or the *Agathists*, [who] claim that the novel's detective story intention is clear from the very beginning and demand a surprising ending" (Lucentini and Fruttero 1992:34). A Holmesian pastiche of *Edwin Drood* will typically end with Holmes' authoritative judgement, in which Dickens' text is decidedly placed in one group or another; in *The D Case* the Porfirians argue with the Agathists, who argue with each other, and the variety of the original enterprise is given room to develop; the potential of the unfinished work is made apparent.

The significance of understanding Droodiana and its variety becomes apparent when one looks at the history of scholarly approaches to *Edwin Drood*. A number of books discussing Dickens' authorship have avoided the final work altogether, ignoring it completely or dismissing it as inaccessible: A. O. J. Cockshut's *The Imagination of Charles Dickens* (1961) ends its investigation with *Our Mutual Friend* because *Edwin Drood* is "too enigmatic" (Cockshut 1961:9); James R. Kincaid in his *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* (1971) consistently fails to mention *Edwin*

[182]Porfiry Petrovich is the detective who investigates the crime of the murderer Raskolnikov in Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment*.

Drood at all; Graeme Smith, in his *Dickens, Money and Society* (1968), does not mention *Edwin Drood* except to state that *Our Mutual Friend* is the last book in which Dickens attempts to "comprehend himself and his age", and that *Edwin Drood*'s "emptiness" confirms this (Smith 1968:192-3); I have already mentioned Q.D. Leavis' brute dismissal (page 203), which was no less severe.

The lack of an ending does pose problems for a critical approach within a discourse that relies on the sanction of the author-function in order to separate and demarcate texts, as it can never entirely support a reading; therefore, more than other texts, an unfinished text like *Edwin Drood* escapes the attempt to control it: the lack of a sanctioned whole from which to construct meaning makes reading problematic. This trait, however, also leaves it particularly vulnerable to the imposition of tautological readings: the positing of an ending that will suit the desired interpretation. This is perhaps especially a danger in readings that would propose a pattern in Dickens' authorship as a whole or read the final text according to preset theories. Like *The D. Case*, this thesis has shown the choices and exclusions inherent in positing an ending, and demonstrated the importance of an awareness of such choices in scholarly writing that would deal with this text. Both dismissal and the positing of a convenient end to the novel end up reducing and limiting the fragment: one by refusing to engage with it, and the other by obscuring the significance of the action of positing an end from which to interpret it by misattributing a conjecture as the authorial and authoritative.

There are of course also readings which show awareness of the problems of reading the text without dismissing it as unreadable. Such readings rely, however, on the Droodian exploration of the potential directions of the text. While Droodiana

tends to focus primarily on the concerns of plot, it has throughout its history paid very close attention to the text and the possibilities it affords. A study of Droodiana demonstrates the potential of the middle of the text in a way that can only with difficulty, if at all, be reconstructed in a finished narrative. While Droodian speculation aims to close off the text by providing the final, authoritative plot, its value lies in another direction: it explores the potential openings of the text and its many possible avenues of development in a way which scholarly attention of the novel needs to take into account.

The D. Case does this at a fictional level. Rather than attempt to appropriate the authorial authority of "completion", it celebrates the diversity and heterogeneity of the plots the fragment has given rise to, thereby (while incorporating Dickens' text and its possible endings) creating from its own position of authority.[183] In the end, *The D. Case* punctures the demand for completeness by providing a series of possible solutions in which the killer of Edwin is said to be either Jasper (suffering from a split personality), an unknown assassin or (unusually) the Landless twins, before ending in the revelation that Dickens was killed by Wilkie Collins because the true ending would have plagiarised one of his plots. Too horrified by what they uncover, the participants suppress it in favour of a more palatable "truth". Having illustrated the potential avenues open to the unfinished text, it thereby ends by illustrating the anxiety to protect the reputation of Dickens, which is so central to the Droodian enterprise.

[183]It is worth noting that other novels that have dealt with *Edwin Drood* over the last few years have attempted a similar strategy. Both Dan Simmons' *Drood* (2009) and Matthew Pearl's *The Last Dickens* (2009) have based their novels around the fragment (rather than attempting a completion of Dickens' text), but both do so within a more conventional novel form and do not come close to the playfulness of *The D. Case*.

As an unfinished text, *Edwin Drood* challenges its readers to themselves participate in the creation of the foundation for their own reading. Most of Droodiana does not acknowledge this, and instead seeks to couch its endings in the creative authority of Dickens, while they are in fact the result of a complex negotiation between the reading of the fragment and the creative imagination of the reader. It is, perhaps, the ultimate "writerly" text.

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